



# Holyrood 2026

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# Holyrood Elections 2026

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# About Prospect

Prospect is the UK's leading trade union for engineers, managers, and specialists. We represent more than 162,000 members in the UK working across the public and private sectors. This includes over 13,000 members in Scotland. Prospect represents workers in the Civil Service and other public bodies as well as in the energy, defence, aviation, heritage, science, and technology sectors. Through our Bectu sector we are the largest union for the creative industries, representing off-screen talent including freelance and self-employed workers.

## Prospect Union Policy Positions for the 2026 Holyrood Elections

The 2026 Holyrood elections come at a pivotal point for Scottish democracy, and amidst increasing public scrutiny of governments' and politicians' ability to deliver for people not just in Scotland but across the UK. Without investment in the instruments of policy delivery, in the infrastructure of Scotland, and in the cultural and material wellbeing of its population in the workforce, the ambitions of Holyrood risk being undermined. Prospect urges all candidates to stand up for workers in Scotland and invest in good quality jobs.

### Here are Prospect's Policy Priorities, Driven by our Members

- We have been campaigning on political issues for a number of years, both behind the scenes and in public. We are not affiliated to any political party, but we are politically active. This means we can campaign fiercely with, and on behalf of, our members.
- Below you can find a series of policy asks to make work better in Scotland, plus some areas which cut across all areas of the economy such as union rights and the future of the world of work.

# Safeguarding Public Sector Work and Advancing Fairness at Work in a Changing Scotland

Our members, including those in the Scottish Government and its associated Non Departmental Public Bodies, are the backbone of Scottish public life. They deserve recognition, respect, and robust protections as the demands on their roles increase.

## Key Policy Asks

### 1. Fair Work and Job Security

- **Protect public sector jobs** from outsourcing, casualisation, and budget-driven cuts.
- Ensure that any expansion of the legislative agenda of Holyrood—which will potentially lead to increased legislative scrutiny, committee work, and administrative support—does not lead to overwork or under resourcing of staff.
- Commit to **workforce planning** that anticipates increased workloads and funds additional staffing where needed.

### 2. Pay, Terms, and Conditions

- Deliver **fair and inflation-proof pay settlements** for all public sector workers, recognising the essential nature of their work.
- Uphold and enhance **terms and conditions**, including flexible working, right to disconnect, career development, and mental health support.
- Ensure proper recognition and reward for **specialist and technical roles**, which are often undervalued despite their critical contributions.
- Pursue joint frameworks with trade unions on the adoption, use of and impact of AI on the workplace.

### 3. Union Rights and Collective Voice

- Guarantee full trade union recognition and access (both physically and digitally), in all public sector workplaces.
- Support facility time for union representatives to carry out their duties effectively.
- Promote social partnership and meaningful consultation with unions on all workforce-related decisions, especially in relation to the use of efficiency programmes and AI.

### 4. Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

- Embed **equality impact assessments** in all public sector reforms and budget decisions.
- Tackle pay gaps and barriers to progression for underrepresented groups. This includes taking action on the Gender Pensions Gap in public services.

- Ensure that the public sector leads by example in creating **inclusive, respectful, and safe workplaces**.

## **Why This Matters**

Prospect urges all candidates to stand up for public sector professionals who serve Scotland with dedication and expertise. A fairer Scotland depends on a strong public service.

*Question to all political parties:*

*Will your party commit to delivering fair pay and good work for Prospect members across the public service, and what steps will you take to deliver these objectives?*

# Protecting Scotland's Heritage: Investing in People, Preserving Our Past

Prospect represents professionals and specialists across Scotland's heritage institutions, including National Museums Scotland, National Library of Scotland, National Galleries of Scotland, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, Historic Environment Scotland, John Muir Trust, NatureScot, National Mining Museum Scotland, Cairngorm National Park, and the National Trust for Scotland. These institutions are vital to safeguarding the cultural, historical, and environmental legacy of Scotland. Yet, they have faced years of underfunding, job losses, lack of investment and erosion of specialist expertise.

We urge all candidates to commit to a renewed vision for the heritage sector—one that values its workforce, protects its future, and recognises its role in national identity, education, and tourism.

## Key Policy Asks

### 1. Reverse Cuts and Invest in the Sector

- **Restore and increase core funding** for heritage institutions, reversing cuts of up to 15% in the last ten years.
- Ensure **multi-year funding settlements** to enable long-term planning and sustainability. Annualised budgets do not allow for financial certainty.

### 2. Protect Specialist Roles and Skills

- Halt the erosion of **specialist and technical roles** that are essential to conservation, research, and public engagement.
- Fund **succession planning and skills development** to address the loss of expertise due to retirements and redundancies.
- Support **apprenticeships and early-career pathways** to build the next generation of heritage professionals.

### 3. Fair Pay and Conditions

- Deliver **fair, inflation-proof pay settlements** in a timely manner that reflect the value and complexity of heritage work.
- Ensure **parity of esteem** with other public sector professionals, including access to flexible working, career progression, and wellbeing support.
- Address **pay disparities** and ensure transparent, equitable reward structures.

### 4. Union Rights and Fair Work

- Guarantee **trade union recognition** and access across all heritage institutions.
- Support **collective bargaining** and uphold the principles of **social partnership**.
- Promote **fair work standards**, including job security, dignity at work, and protection from casualisation.

## Why This Matters

Scotland's heritage is a national treasure, and is celebrated across the globe. It is a living, working sector that relies on the dedication and commitment of skilled professionals. Years of funding cuts have weakened the sector's resilience and led to the loss of irreplaceable cultural assets but also the demoralisation of the workforce that stewards them.

Prospect calls on all Holyrood candidates to champion a fairer, better-funded, and more secure future for Scotland's heritage sector—one that honours the past by investing in the people who protect it.

*Question to all political parties:*

*Will your party commit to our policy aims, and what steps will you take to give confidence to our members across the heritage and environment sector that their jobs are secure, that they can look forward to developing careers in their chosen field and that the heritage and environment of Scotland is protected, valued and receives appropriate investment?*

# Safeguarding Scotland's Creative Industries: Our Voice, Our Future

The Bectu sector of Prospect represents the interests of workers in Scotland's vibrant creative industries, spanning film, television, arts, live events and more. These sectors don't just drive economic growth but also play a vital role in preserving our language and culture. However, they face unique challenges like job insecurity, specialised skill requirements, and inclusivity barriers.

Scotland has long been at the forefront of the creative industries and they allow Scotland to present itself to the world in a positive way that brings significant economic benefit. We urge candidates to pledge support for the creative industries that prioritises workers, secures its future and celebrates Scotland's global storytelling.

## Key Policy Asks

### 1. Investment

- Boost funding to sustain Scotland's cultural spend. A recent report by Arts Council England, endorsed by Creative Scotland, explains that across the UK as a whole, every £1 invested in the arts yields £5 of tax revenue.

### 2. Engagement

- Adopt recommendations made by the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC) in May 2025 to encourage employers to work with unions to create fair work agreements, and for the Government to update its Fair Work First guidance to recognise that unions are the legitimate voice of workers.

### 3. Skills Development

- Scale up successful initiatives like BECTU Vision to enhance workforce skills, mental health, and wellbeing.

### 4. Fair Work Practices

- Adopt the STUC recommendations to agree minimum standards with unions that those on freelance contracts should be entitled to expect, and grant Creative Scotland a specific remit to monitor and enforce fair working practices within the sector.

## Why This Matters

Scotland's creative industries are essential for employment, cultural enrichment, and societal wellbeing. Investing in these industries is not only economically wise but also crucial for the nation's prosperity and global influence.

*Question to all political parties:*

*How will you ensure that the creative sector in Scotland can do more to showcase the country to the outside world, and to safeguard the economic benefits that this brings? What*

*steps will you take to make work within the creative sector fairer and safer for our members?*

# Securing Scotland's Scientific Future: Fair Work, Innovation, and Just Transition

Prospect represents highly skilled professionals in Scotland's public research bodies and in the growing private science and innovation sector, including members at the James Hutton Institute, Moredun Research Institute, the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh and Scotland's Rural College amongst others. These workplaces are at the forefront of agri-food systems, understanding the impacts of global climate change, and ensuring food security involving soils, plants and animals—sectors vital to Scotland's economic resilience and global competitiveness.

We call on all candidates to champion a **vision for science and innovation that is fair, future-focused, and worker-led.**

## Key Policy Asks

### 1. Support and Secure a Future for Science and Innovation

- Recognise that the science sector is one of the **core drivers of innovation and economic growth**, and deliver long-term sustainable funding streams to prevent over-reliance on short-term grant funding.
- Protect **the national capacity workforce and infrastructure**, and respect the plurality of functions that contribute to the sector, including not just the specialists but the teams that support them.
- Ensure that **public investment in R&D** comes with social value conditions, including fair work, skills development, and local economic benefit.

### 2. Protect and Promote High-Quality Specialist Roles

- Recognise the strategic importance of STEM professionals in Scotland and ensure their voices are heard in policymaking.
- Support STEM skills pipelines, including apprenticeships, graduate pathways, and lifelong learning.
- Deliver a **visa system** that is designed to satisfy the industrial strategy with regards to scientific roles.

### 3. Fair Pay and Conditions

- Ensure that science workers benefit from **fair pay settlements** that reflect their expertise and contribution to national priorities.
- Promote **transparent pay structures**, career progression, and access to flexible working.
- Encourage employers to adopt **Fair Work principles**, including job security, dignity at work, and work-life balance.

### 4. Union Rights and Collective Voice

- Support **trade union recognition** and collective bargaining in the science sector.

- Ensure that workers have a **genuine voice** in shaping workplace change, especially in areas like automation, AI, and sustainability.
- Promote **social partnership** models that bring together government, employers, and unions to shape the future of work.

## Why This Matters

Scotland has a unique opportunity to lead in science, innovation and food security. This future must be built on **fairness, sustainability and respect for workers**. The science sector is not only a driver for economic growth, it is a source of high-value, high skill employment that must be protected and nurtured. Prospect calls on Holyrood candidates to commit to a **science-led, worker centred future** where innovation and fairness go hand in hand.

# Powering a Fairer Future: Clean Energy Jobs, Just Transition, and Workers' Rights

Prospect represents highly skilled professionals across Scotland's energy and renewables sector, including those working in offshore wind, solar, hydrogen, and grid infrastructure. As Scotland accelerates its transition to a net-zero economy, our members are at the forefront of delivering the infrastructure and innovation needed to meet climate targets.

Our members also work across the nuclear sector, including in nuclear decommissioning. Nuclear power is clean and low carbon, homegrown and secure, and provides good, unionised jobs. However, despite having multiple suitable nuclear sites and a skilled workforce, Scotland is currently missing out on the potential benefits of new gigawatt-scale and small modular nuclear generation due to government policy against nuclear new build. This is forcing Scotland's nuclear workforce to move to sites in England to continue employment in the sector. The 2026 Holyrood elections come at a pivotal moment. Scotland has the opportunity to consolidate its lead in clean energy—but this must be a **Just Transition**: one that delivers **high-quality clean energy jobs**, protects workers' rights, and ensures no community is left behind.

## Key Policy Asks

### 1. Deliver a Just Transition for Energy Workers

- Develop and implement **Just Transition action plans** in partnership with unions, employers, and communities.
- Ensure that workers in fossil fuel and legacy sectors are supported with **reskilling, redeployment, and income protection**.
- Prioritise **local employment and supply chains** in renewable and nuclear energy projects, ensuring that the economic benefits of green growth stay in Scotland.

### 2. Invest in High-Quality Clean Energy Jobs

- Support the creation of secure, unionised jobs in renewable energy, nuclear energy, energy efficiency, and low-carbon infrastructure.
- Ensure that public investment in clean energy includes social value clauses—covering fair work, training, and community benefit.
- Back STEM education **and apprenticeships** to build a pipeline of skilled workers for the clean energy economy.

### 3. Fair Pay and Conditions

- Guarantee that clean energy jobs are **good jobs**—with fair pay, safe working conditions, and opportunities for progression.
- Ensure that new energy projects uphold **Fair Work principles**, including job security, dignity at work, and work-life balance.

## 4. Union Rights and Collective Voice

- Support trade union recognition and collective bargaining across the energy and renewables sector.
- Involve unions in the design and delivery of energy transition strategies.
- Uphold the role of unions in ensuring that technological change and decarbonisation are managed **with, not to**, the workforce.

### Why This Matters

Scotland has the natural resources and talent to be a leader in clean energy. But the transition to net zero must be **fair, inclusive, and worker-led**. Without strong protections and investment in people, the clean economy risks replicating the inequalities of the past.

Prospect calls on all Holyrood candidates to commit to a **Just Transition that works for workers**—where climate action and social justice go hand in hand.

*Question to all political parties:*

*Will your party support nuclear new build in Scotland to build upon and enhance the drive for clean energy, and support and underpin good jobs and a just transition?*

# Investing in the Civil Service

A strong civil service is essential for delivering effective governance and public services. Prospect advocates for investment in skills, fair pay, and workforce planning to prevent attrition and maintain high standards. Years of pay erosion and underfunding have weakened capacity, risking service quality.

## Key Policy Asks

- Commit to long-term workforce planning and skills development, especially in STEM and digital roles.
- Deliver fair, inflation-proof pay settlements to reverse a decade of real-terms pay cuts.
- Reduce reliance on costly consultants by investing in in-house expertise and career pathways.
- Embed social partnership principles in civil service reform, ensuring union voices shape decisions.

## Why This Matters

A well-resourced civil service is the backbone of effective governance. Years of pay erosion and underfunding have led to skills shortages and reliance on costly consultants. Without investment in people, the ambitions of the next Scottish Government cannot be delivered. Fair pay and workforce planning are essential to maintain capacity, expertise, and public trust.