

# Our Manifesto

## About the SDA

The Scottish Democratic Alliance (SDA) is a political party and think tank dedicated to researching and evolving the future governance of Scotland. We want to see grass roots democracy in Scotland – a Scotland where the ultimate power of decision rests with the Scottish people. We apply the same principle to the SDA's members, who have a full say on policies and all party matters.

## The Big Picture

The SDA supports the idea that sovereignty and independence are inseparable. It therefore stands for constitutional independence for Scotland within a confederal relationship with Scotland's neighbours, including the Republic of Ireland. There will still be many issues that will have to be agreed by consensus across the entire archipelago. This Friends and Neighbours policy has its roots in both domestic and international conditions, for we live in an era of upheaval, of drastic change, and the ongoing need to manage local cross-border functions through cooperation between individual sovereign states.

We must adapt to the times, and the present method of governing our country, even after devolution, is not providing us with adequate means to do so. We have to work within a system of European and global cooperation, including cooperation within the archipelago of the British Isles, but we still need the full and ultimate power of decision making on our own affairs in the light of the conditions that prevail within Scotland, and in the world surrounding us.

Geographically and climatically, Scotland is a distinctively Scandinavian country located on the north-eastern Atlantic seaboard, a factor that has a wide-ranging influence on economic, social and other government policies. It cannot be adequately governed by a set of rules devised in the first instance for the very different conditions of southern England or central Europe.

The SDA, while recognising the need to work within the new and expanding framework in which regional and global processes are managed, is determined that Scotland's needs and interests are going to be upheld and protected internationally, and that the concerns of ordinary citizens are not going to be submerged or ignored within the new international political and economic system.

## The SDA Strategy

The SDA's statement of its policies on its website is presented in two forms: firstly a succinct summary intended for the general reader (Our Vision); and then an in-depth presentation (Policies) aimed at those readers who require more detailed and specific information on the lines of policy the SDA proposes to follow.

We do not indulge in empty slogans and wild generalisations, but our policies are always subject to updating in the light of changed circumstances, and in some cases are still in the course of initial development. There is still work to be done, and plenty of scope for new expert talent among our membership.

The SDA offers a vision of a Scotland quite distinct from its current persona. In old-fashioned political parlance, the SDA promotes policies, some of which could be termed 'right' and others that could be seen as 'left'. In doing so it offers the chance of a second Enlightenment to Scots with the imagination to consider new ways of governing a modern community as an organic whole unencumbered by the 300 years of feudal society and privilege that is now rapidly destroying the United Kingdom.

Since we live in an already globalised world, the SDA has the necessary know-how and experience to integrate Scotland into what is now, of necessity, a closely interdependent worldwide political and economic community, and generally to further Scottish interests internationally.

We are very conscious, however, that the primary interests of the Scottish people lie much nearer home, and that these demand efficient administration at the most local level that is compatible with efficiency. We are firmly against unnecessary centralisation at any level.

The SDA is committed to upholding the welfare state, to the provision of competently run health, education and other basic services, and to the care of those citizens who have fallen by the wayside. There are also certain vital infrastructural services that are best kept under state administration or control. These services are not luxuries, but basic necessities that together constitute the takeoff platform for outgoing enterprise in all its forms.

There is, however, little chance of accomplishing any of this in the absence of a thriving and innovative entrepreneurial system of wealth creation, especially manufacturing industry. Not everything can or should be organised by the state, but the state can materially assist or hinder the unfolding of enterprise. The SDA is therefore not out to trumpet all the great things it is going to do for Scotland, for our aim is rather to create a Scotland in which the Scots can do great things for themselves.

No state or community is an island today, in the metaphorical sense. We are all part of an interlinked and interdependent global community, while retaining our national characteristics, our magnificent Scottish national culture, our highly developed sense of community, and our unique identity that makes us distinct in the world. It is a great thing to be a Scot nowadays and able to play a role in the service of our fellow men and women worldwide. The SDA proposes to enhance and extend Scotland's international presence, participation and status to the mutual benefit of ourselves and our fellow human beings everywhere.

It is clear that the administration of a modern state with such an agenda will increasingly make demands on the abilities of decision makers that far exceed those that would have been imaginable just a few years ago. They must be equal to the job – a job that nowadays presents an unprecedented intellectual challenge over a vast field of variegated human activity that must nonetheless be viewed as a whole. The task calls for exceptional personal qualities, and mediocrity is not a valid qualification.

Therefore, when it comes to the selection of Scottish parliamentary candidates, the SDA will exercise a preference for persons of commitment to Scotland, its institutions and culture, with relevant personal and educational qualifications and a breadth of real life experience, rather than the currently emergent style of professional politicians of restricted general experience who know little or nothing of the working world outside of politics. We will also endeavour to ensure that those elected at national and local level will act as representatives of the people who elect them, and not primarily of a political party.

### **An Invitation**

The presence of the SDA at the first election for an independent Scottish Government will give the electorate the chance to vote for a thoroughly researched vision for Scotland, with the expectation that the SDA's sensible and workable approach to government, economic development, security and social wellbeing will cause other parties to reconsider and modify their policies in response.

The SDA's appearance on the Scottish political landscape is of primary importance at a time when the political future of the country is teetering in the balance. On no account can we afford to permit the emergence of another one-party state in Scotland, especially since the memory of Labour's stranglehold on Scotland for half a century is still fresh in our memories. This is especially vital at a time when the foundations that are being laid for the future will dominate Scotland's public life for generations to come.

The Scottish Democratic Alliance, with its roots in the Scotland-UN Committee that brought about the restoration of the Scottish Parliament and Government through its command of international diplomacy, has already acquired a wealth of relevant experience for the establishment of a mainstream political institution designed for the age in which we live, and not for the past.

This must now be translated into detailed SDA policy, a task that is already well under way in respect of a draft national constitution for Scotland and many other aspects of policy, but must now be constantly reviewed and updated in the light of future developments. The SDA is already present, with deep roots in Scottish politics, proven experience and a comprehensive programme, ready to take the stage when the moment is right.

It does, however, need a constant infusion of new blood to carry on the work and provide the future leadership of the SDA as it advances towards its role as one of

Scotland's mainstream institutions – a role for which it has been designed from the very beginning.

This is obviously a field of prime excellence for a younger generation of Scots who desire to play a significant role in their country's future. The SDA welcomes new members as it expands towards the goals it has set itself. It guarantees them active participation in the planning of the steps that will be necessary to establish and consolidate Scotland's future role as a nation grounded on pluralist democracy, firmly anchored in the rule of law, committed to the guardianship of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and playing a mutually beneficial role within the worldwide fellowship of nations.