



# Renewing Democracy through Independence

BUILDING A NEW  
**SCOTLAND**



## Summary

The 'Building a New Scotland' series gives people the information they need to make an informed choice in a referendum on Scotland's future.

This second paper sets out the Scottish Government's view that people who live in Scotland have the right to choose how they should be governed and to decide if Scotland should become an independent country.

Scotland is a nation within the United Kingdom (UK), with its own parliament and elected government.

Like the Welsh Government, the Scottish Government believes that the UK is a voluntary association of nations and that the wishes expressed by the people of Scotland in elections should be respected.

Since the UK left the European Union (EU), the UK Government has passed more laws that override the powers of the Scottish Parliament.

If backed by a majority, the UK's House of Commons and unelected House of Lords could change the powers of the Scottish Parliament, or even abolish it, at any time.

The Scottish Government wants Scotland's decision-making to be respected, protected and strengthened.

Scotland has already benefitted from the ability to make decisions on issues where Scotland's Parliament and Government hold the power.

Under different governments, these benefits include the introduction of free personal care for older people, the end of prescription and dental charges and the protection of tuition-free university education and the NHS from privatisation.

Families on low incomes have received help with the cost of living through measures like the Scottish Child Payment.

Scottish Government decisions on taxation have created a fairer and more progressive system where, in 2022-23, the majority of Scottish taxpayers paid less income tax than they would if they lived elsewhere in the UK.



The voting system used at Scottish local and parliamentary elections is also fairer than at UK level, with the numbers of MSPs from different parties more representative of how people actually voted.

The current governing party at Westminster has six MPs representing Scotland and has not won an election in Scotland for almost 70 years. For 39 of the 77 years since the Second World War, Scotland has been governed by UK governments that were elected by fewer than half of Scottish constituencies.

Under the current system, it is still only the UK's Government and Parliament that can make decisions about many issues that impact significantly on people's daily lives.

These include decisions on defence and whether Scotland should be in the EU. It also includes decisions on key energy policies such as levels of support for renewable projects.

The UK Government makes the majority of decisions on cutting or increasing taxes, pensions and benefits like Universal Credit.

As set out in detail in the main paper, UK Government decisions have, in many areas, had long-term and detrimental effects on the people who live in Scotland.

This includes failure to invest Scotland's north sea oil revenues in a fund which, according to one estimate, could now be worth over £500 billion – around three times Scotland's annual national income.

Scotland has been taken out the EU despite it voting to remain, and the UK Government's Brexit deal is making it harder for Scots to travel, work, trade and do business in EU countries.

The UK Government has refused to give powers over migration to Scotland. This is despite Scotland being the only part of the UK where the number of people of working age is expected to fall over the next 25 years, meaning we need to attract talent from overseas.

Any UK Government pledges of more powers to Scotland would not change the fact that, ultimately, the power to make decisions would still sit at Westminster.

There is now a substantial majority in the Scottish Parliament in favour of, and elected on, a clear commitment to giving the people of Scotland the choice of independence through a referendum.

Independence will put the power to decide Scotland's future in Scotland's hands, with decisions made by governments the people of Scotland have voted for.

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