

From: Cook N (Nick) <Nick.Cook@parliament.scot>

Sent: 25 April 2018 15:13

To: Global Goals

Cc: Paul Bradley

Subject: RE: An open letter to the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party Leader - SDGs in Scotland

Dear Co-signatories,

Thank you for your open letter regarding the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party's actions in relation to Sustainable Development Goals.

I am sure you appreciate the limitations of political parties on an organisational level (as opposed to our policy platform). That said, the Party has put in place several steps that are aimed at improving equality and inclusivity, especially in our candidate selection.

For example, applicants seeking to become approved parliamentary candidates are asked how they have personally acted in a way that supports diversity – in every sense. Furthermore, the application fee for candidates is waived for those that cannot pay, and accessibility is ensured at all venues for all candidates during the selection process.

The Party also publishes manifestos in easy-access forms, with large print, clear print and audio formats available for the 2016 Scottish Parliament version. I read out the manifesto for the audio version, for blind, short-sighted and sight impaired voters.

We have also set up two dedicated initiatives to further support equality and diversity in our candidates and elected representatives. Women2Win Scotland is a broad cross-section of men and women from the Scottish Conservative & Unionist Party who have come together to ensure the Party encourages the participation of women at all levels of politics. Women2win aims to identify, support, train, assess and mentor women during the candidacy process.

Building on the success of Women2Win, the Scottish Conservatives have also launched a Commission headed by Baroness Nosheena Mobarik MEP to ensure greater ethnic diversity in the party's ranks at the next Holyrood election. We are keen to ensure both that more women are selected in winnable seats and regions and our BME community is better represented in person on our benches in the next Parliament.

We also engage with outside organisations regarding equality and inclusivity. In particular, we work closely with Inclusion Scotland, who are the providers of the Scottish Government's 'Access to Elected Office Fund'. The fund helped a number of our disabled local government candidates with practical support that enabled them to fully participate in the process of standing for election.

We have also worked with the Regional Equality Council to provide guidance to people from BME communities on getting involved in public life, and had contact with organisations including the Equal Representation Council regarding guidance and information on our processes.

While there is more to do, the steps described above demonstrate our Party's commitment to Sustainable Development Goals, which we will continue to support.

Regarding the Party's approach to various policy areas, and the action the Scottish Conservatives would take in government to address the areas you cite, please refer to our 2016 Scottish manifesto and subsequent policy papers which can all be found on our website.

Yours sincerely,

Ruth Davidson

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