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Scottish Government-Green Cooperation Agreement and other forms of political agreement

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This briefing provides an overview of the cooperation agreement between the Scottish Government and the Scottish Green Parliamentary Party agreed in August 2021. It also gives information on other forms of political working agreements such as confidence and supply and formal coalition.



29 September 2021
SB 21-66

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Introduction

In August 2021 the Scottish Government and the Scottish Green Parliamentary Party ('the Greens') announced that they had entered into a cooperation agreement. This agreement was made following a period of negotiation after the Scottish Parliament elections in May 2021, where the Scottish National Party (SNP) [formed a minority government](#).

The cooperation agreement sets out how the Scottish Government and the Greens intend to work together over the course of the next five years. The cooperation agreement envisages that it will be in place for the duration of the session six Parliament.

Scotland has had formal coalition governments in the past. The first two Scottish Parliament elections failed to return a majority for one party. In both instances Scottish Labour and the Scottish Liberal Democrats entered into coalition and formed the first two Scottish administrations. The SNP has formed both majority and minority administrations after past elections.

The cooperation agreement is the first of its type since devolution in Scotland.

This briefing considers the [terms of the Scottish Government and Greens cooperation agreement](#) and what this may mean for [Parliamentary business](#) during session six. It then goes on to provide additional background information, looking at the different ways that governments are formed after elections. These sections include information on previous party [coalition agreements in Scotland and the UK](#), as well as the current [cooperation agreement between the Labour Party and the Green Party in New Zealand](#).

What happens after a general election to the Scottish Parliament: majority or minority government?

There are 129 MSPs elected to the Scottish Parliament. To gain a majority a party needs to see 65 MSPs returned.

After an election takes place, every MSP is sworn in by taking an oath or affirmation. This swearing in takes place at the first meeting of the new Parliament. Once MSPs have been sworn in the first item of business is the election of a Presiding Officer. Deputy Presiding Officers are also elected. The election of the Presiding Officer is set out in [Standing Orders Rule 3.2](#) and [Rule 3.3](#) is concerned with the election of Deputy Presiding Officers.

The Parliament selects a First Minister. The process is set out in the Scottish Parliament's [Standing Orders](#) with Rule 4.1 covering the nomination process and Rule 11.10 the selection process. In practice, the First Minister is usually the leader of the biggest party in the Parliament. Any MSP can, however, be nominated for First Minister. Nominations are made by an MSP writing to the Clerk to nominate another MSP, nominations must also be seconded by an MSP.

“ 3. Any member may, not later than 30 minutes before the time appointed for the voting period for selection of a nominee, nominate a candidate for appointment as First Minister by submitting a written nomination to the Clerk. 4. A nomination shall be valid only if it is seconded by another member.”

Standing Orders of the Scottish Parliament, Chapter 4, Rule 4.1

For the result of a vote to be valid, Rule 11.10.4 stipulates that the number of members who voted must be more than a quarter of the total number of seats for members. If there are two candidates for First Minister then one is selected if they receive a simple majority of votes. If there are more than two candidates then one candidate must receive more votes than the votes for all other candidates added together to be selected.

“ 7. Where there are 2 candidates in a round of voting, a candidate shall be selected if a simple majority of votes in that candidate's favour is obtained. 8. Where there are more than 2 candidates in a round of voting and the number of votes for one candidate exceeds the total number of votes for all the other candidates, that candidate shall be selected.”

Standing Orders, Rule 11.10

Once a First Minister has been selected, they are then able to select MSPs to nominate as Ministers to form the Scottish Government.

A party with a clear majority of seats will usually form a majority government. This means that they have enough members to pass legislative and other proposals which require the backing of parliament.

Sometimes, a minority government will be formed. This was the case, for example, in 2016 when the SNP returned 59 MSPs. If a minority government is formed it usually has confidence that it can make ad hoc alliances with other parties in order to pass budgets and legislation as required.

Alternatively, a minority government may wish to seek agreement with another party or parties to ensure that it has a parliamentary majority as required. The different forms such agreements usually take is [explored in this briefing](#).

The Scottish Government-Green Cooperation Agreement 2021

On 20th August 2021, the Scottish Government and the Greens announced that they had reached agreement on their future working together and published [a draft cooperation agreement](#) and their shared draft policy programme, [Working Together To Build A Greener, Fairer, Independent Scotland](#).¹

The draft cooperation agreement set out the way in which the Scottish Government and the Greens would work together. The draft policy programme focused on areas of mutual interest "to improve the way Scotland is governed and create a stable platform to meet the challenges Scotland faces"².

“ It details collaboration on the climate emergency, economic recovery, child poverty, the natural environment, energy and the constitution.”

Scottish Government agreement with the Scottish Green Party, August 2021

The cooperation agreement is between the Scottish Government and the Greens. At the time that the parties entered into talks, the First Minister and Scottish Ministers had been appointed and the Government formed.

Following the announcement, the Scottish Government-Green cooperation agreement and policy programme were endorsed by the SNP's national executive committee³ and approved and ratified by the Scottish Green Party.⁴ SNP members also backed the agreement in a consultative ballot.

The First Minister delivered a statement to the Scottish Parliament on the agreement on 31st August 2021.⁵ The same day the co-leaders of the Greens, Lorna Slater MSP and Patrick Harvie MSP, were approved as government Ministers by the Scottish Parliament, after being nominated the day before.⁶ Patrick Harvie became [Minister for Zero Carbon Buildings, Active Travel and Tenants' Rights](#), while Lorna Slater became [Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity](#).

The details of the Scottish Government-Green cooperation agreement can be [read in full on the Scottish Government website](#).⁷

The structure of the agreement

The cooperation agreement sets out how the Scottish Government and the Greens will work together in an operational sense and covers technical matters, such as the approach to collective responsibility.

At section B the cooperation agreement commits the Scottish Government and the Greens to delivering a shared programme. This shared programme is detailed in the policy programme document [Working Together To Build A Greener, Fairer, Independent Scotland](#).

An overview of the cooperation agreement

The cooperation agreement is a commitment between the Scottish Government and the Greens to working together for the session six Parliament. It sets out the operational arrangements for their working together, including a commitment to the nomination of two Green MSPs as Scottish Government Ministers. The portfolios that Green Ministers hold are not specified in the agreement.

The [agreement states that](#) the Scottish Government commits to consult the Greens on its legislative programme, and that this collaboration will lead to a legislative programme that both the Scottish Government and the Greens will support. This support will include votes on Bills, on amendments to Bills, on secondary legislation, and on matters of legislative consent, except where legislation relates to an [excluded matter](#).

It also sets out a ‘no surprises’ approach to business in Parliament. This means consulting each other on proposals for parliamentary business, including on motions for debate and amendments to motions.

Detailed in the agreement is a [range of mechanisms](#) to ensure that there is shared oversight of the agreement. This shared oversight aims to promote collaboration. The mechanisms include:

- regular meetings between Ministers,
- an invitation to attend Cabinet meetings extended to the two Green Ministers at least twice a year,
- seats for the two Green Ministers on specific Cabinet sub-committees relevant to their portfolios.

The agreement also documents [a process for dealing with any concerns](#) that either party may have over the course of the session. It commits them to raising concerns in confidence and as early as possible. It also allows, in exceptional circumstances, for an item to be added to the [list of exclusions](#).

The cooperation agreement in detail

The Agreement is broken down into sections A-J as follows:

A. Working together

This sets the tone for the agreement which envisages the Scottish Government and the Greens working together in a “constructive and collaborative way, without entering into coalition”. It sets out that the broad agreement is to work to deliver a shared policy programme with maximum cooperation and collaboration whilst acknowledging areas of disagreement.

B. Delivery of shared programme

This section introduces the policy programme as it commits the Scottish Government and the Greens to delivering a shared programme, as set out in Working together to build a greener, fairer, independent Scotland. The agreement allows for the policy programme to

be developed during the course of the session six parliament and allows for the Scottish Government and the Greens to propose changes to it.

The Section also commits the Scottish Government to consulting with the Greens where implementation of elements of the agreement do not require legislation, as well as to identifying in media statements and publications where a policy is a joint one and involving a Green Minister.

C. Cooperation and collaboration

The agreement states that the Scottish Government will consult the Greens on its legislative programme and on parliamentary business. Similarly, the Greens are to adopt the same 'no surprises' approach to business. The Greens' support in Parliament will extend to votes on Bills, on amendments to Bills, on secondary legislation, and on matters of legislative consent, except where a vote relates to an excluded matter.

D. Excluded matters

This section of the agreement lists a number of areas where the Scottish Government and the Greens have "agreed to differ". The Scottish Government has sole responsibility for the development of policy for excluded matters. Collective responsibility does not cover these matters, and the agreement does not bind the Greens to support Scottish Government legislation on excluded matters. The specifics of the [excluded matters are discussed later in this briefing](#).

E. Shared oversight

The agreement acknowledges the importance of shared oversight and includes mechanisms aimed at ensuring collaboration and cooperation. These include regular meetings between Ministers (including weekly meetings with the Minister for Parliamentary Business and fortnightly meetings with the Deputy First Minister), an invitation for the two Green Minister to attend Cabinet meetings at least twice a year and seats for the two Green Ministers on specific Cabinet sub-committees relevant to their portfolios. It is specified that one Green Minister will sit on the sub-committee for legislation and another on the sub-committee on the climate emergency formed as a result of the agreement.

F. Raising and resolving concerns

A process for raising and dealing with concerns in a confidential manner is set out. Ultimately the First Minister and Deputy First Minister and the Co-Leaders of the Greens are responsible for agreeing any resolution. In exceptional circumstances, this process allows for an item to be added to the list of exclusions.

G. Confidence and supply

The Greens will support the Scottish Government in votes of confidence. On supply (including the budget) the Greens will support the Scottish Government so long as the joint policy programme is being adequately funded. It also envisages that the joint policy programme will influence spending priorities.

H. Ministers

A commitment to the nomination of two Green MSPs as Scottish Government Ministers. The portfolios that the two Green Ministers hold are not specified in the agreement but on

31st August 2021 Patrick Harvie MSP was appointed Minister for Zero Carbon Buildings, Active Travel and Tenants' Rights, while Lorna Slater MSP became Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity. The First Minister is to consult the Co-Leaders of the Greens prior to changing these portfolios or making new appointments to them. Two special advisers will also be appointed to support the new Green Ministers.

The section also covers the approach to [collective responsibility](#).

I. Confidentiality

This section simply sets out that all information shared between the Scottish Government and the Greens because of the cooperation agreement being in place are confidential.

J. Duration

The Agreement is for the duration of the session six Parliament. It can, however, be brought to an end either by the Scottish Government or the Greens before the end of the session.

Collective responsibility

Collective responsibility is a component of the cooperation agreement. The Scottish Government operates on the basis of collective responsibility, meaning that all decisions reached by Scottish Ministers, individually or collectively, are binding on all members of the Government.

The two Green Ministers will, as a result, be bound by collective responsibility except on areas set out as excluded matters in the agreement. The agreement [discusses this directly](#), noting that:

“ the two Green Ministers will "observe the principle of collective responsibility, except in respect of excluded matters. Where commenting on a matter where the principle of collective responsibility does not apply, these Ministers must make clear that they are not commenting on behalf of the Scottish Government. ⁷ ”

Excluded matters

While the agreement details how the Scottish Government and Greens will work together, it also lists a number of areas where they have "agreed to differ". These are set out in the agreement as excluded matters. The Scottish Government will have sole responsibility for the development of policy for excluded matters. ⁷

The excluded matters are listed as:

- the role of Gross Domestic Product measurements, and economic principles related to concepts of sustainable growth and inclusive growth
- aviation policy (except in respect of island aviation connectivity and Highlands and Islands Airports Limited), the future of green ports, and direct financial support to businesses involved in the aerospace, defence and security sectors

- international relations, except to the extent they are addressed in the shared programme. This includes the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and any commitment to membership of NATO following independence
- field sports, except to the extent they are addressed in the shared programme
- the legal status and regulation of selling sex
- private fee-paying independent schools.⁷

The Scottish Government-Green cooperation agreement lists only areas of exclusion, in contrast to the [New Zealand Cooperation Agreement](#) which lists only the limited areas of cooperation in detail.^{7 1}

The process set out in [Section C](#) allows the Scottish Government and the Greens to explore policy areas where they have not yet reached agreement (as set out in the [shared policy programme](#)) nor agreed to disagree (listed as excluded matters). Section C is designed to “seek to achieve maximum cooperation and collaboration on the broadest range of the Government’s responsibilities.”⁷

The shared policy programme

The cooperation agreement document commits the Scottish Government and the Greens to work together to deliver a shared policy programme.

The shared policy programme document [Working Together To Build A Greener, Fairer, Independent Scotland](#) sets out in detail the areas where the Scottish Government and the Greens have decided to collaborate.

The policy programme covers topics such as the climate emergency, economic recovery, child poverty, the natural environment, energy and the constitution. The policy programme includes commitments to:

- hold a referendum on Scottish independence after the COVID pandemic has passed, within the current parliamentary session
- increase investment in active travel and public transport, including a Fair Fares review to provide a realistic and affordable alternative to car use
- a strengthened framework of support for the marine renewables and offshore wind sectors
- take forward a ten-year £500 million Just Transition Fund for the North East and Moray
- significantly increase the level of the Scottish Child Payment, in order to maximise the impact on child poverty, with the full £20 payment being achieved within the lifetime of the Parliament
- designate at least one new National Park by the end of this parliamentary session
- enhance marine environmental protection

- implement an effective national system of rent controls, enhance tenants' rights and deliver 110,000 affordable homes by 2032
- invest at least £1.8 billion over this parliamentary session in energy efficiency and renewable heating
- establish two new Scottish Government overseas offices in Warsaw and Copenhagen to promote Scotland's interests in central Europe and the Nordic countries ¹

This policy programme was used to inform [A Fairer, Greener Scotland: the Programme for Government for 2021 to 2022](#). The Programme for Government was published on 7th September 2021 following a speech by the First Minister to Parliament. A Fairer, Greener Scotland sets out the priorities for the Scottish Government over the first year of the session and includes its legislative programme.

The impact of the cooperation agreement on Parliamentary Business

The [Standing Orders of the Scottish Parliament](#) ⁸ are the formal rules for how business is planned and conducted in the Scottish Parliament. Alongside these rules, decisions on business matters are made by the [Presiding Officer](#), the [Parliamentary Bureau](#), or follow an established convention or practice.

At the start of a session, agreement is reached regarding how regular business will be conducted, including ensuring that political groups have a fair share of time in the chamber, and a proportionate number of members sitting on committees.

Following the announcement of the agreement between the Scottish Government and the Greens, the [Presiding Officer wrote to members of the Scottish Parliament on 31 August 2021](#) giving details of the allocation of questions at First Minister's Questions.

“ This political agreement is unparalleled in Scotland and indeed the UK. While it contains significant areas of agreement and co-operation across a wide range of government portfolios and policies, it stops short of being equivalent to the coalition governments in place during Sessions 1 and 2. However, the scope of the Agreement (and accompanying shared policy programme) together with the “no surprises” approach to matters of parliamentary business establishes a different relationship between the Scottish Government and Green Group than exists between any other parties and the position of the Scottish Greens as the third largest opposition party in the Parliament is fundamentally altered. The Agreement therefore requires a bespoke response here at Holyrood, one which draws on precedents and practices, is fair to all parties represented in the Parliament, and is commensurate with the requirements of robust parliamentary scrutiny.”

Letter from the Presiding Officer, 31 August 2021

The letter indicated the following changes to the Parliamentary business programme:

- The Greens will be allocated a backbench question at First Minister's Questions in three weeks out of six, being called at question three in two of those six weeks. Prior to the agreement the Greens had a leader's question at question three in four weeks

out of six and a backbench question on one of the other weeks.

- After Ministerial statements the Greens will not be called for questions before any other backbenchers, unless the topic of the statement is not covered by an area of cooperation set out in the Agreement. Prior to the agreement the Greens and the Scottish Liberal Democrat parties would have a chance to submit a question before other backbenchers.
- During debates the Greens will no longer be allocated an opening and a closing speaking slot unless one of the party's amendments has been selected. Instead the Greens will have one speaking slot in the same way as the Scottish Liberal Democrats do.
- The Greens will no longer be allocated any of the 16 half sitting days set aside to consider business chosen by political parties which are not represented in the Scottish Government.

Green backbench MSPs retain the right to submit their names to the draws for Portfolio and General Questions, and to request Topical, Urgent and SPCB questions.

The Greens will retain the party's allocated seats on Scottish Parliament committees. Ministers do not however, by convention, sit on committees. As such, backbench Green MSPs will take Committee positions previously held by Lorna Slater MSP and Patrick Harvie MSP.

Cooperation and coalition

After an election, the party with the largest number of seats is given the [opportunity to form a government](#).

For any party that does not hold a majority of the seats, there are a number of avenues that can be taken to ensure confidence that they can pass budgets and legislation as required. On occasion parties which return a majority at an election may still wish to seek a formalised relationship with a smaller party (see [section on the New Zealand cooperation agreement](#)).

This includes forming a [cooperation agreement](#), which may take a number of different forms, or potentially choosing to form a [coalition](#) instead. These matters are discussed in the following sections of this briefing.

Cooperation Agreements

In general 'cooperation agreement' is a term used to refer to an agreement which set out the terms of cooperation between a minority government and another party which falls short of coalition. Cooperation agreements can differ greatly in extent, ranging from limited confidence and supply agreements to more comprehensive agreements which include the junior party holding Ministerial positions.

Limited cooperation agreements

Limited cooperation agreements do not have a set model. Such agreements are the least comprehensive cooperation agreements a minority government can look to. Often, they are agreed on the basis of '[confidence and supply](#)'. However, agreements do not always follow the [confidence and supply model](#).

Following the 2007 Scottish general election, for example, the SNP and the Scottish Green Party signed a limited cooperation agreement which fell short of the usual confidence and supply model⁹.

The 2007 agreement saw the SNP government agree to back a climate change bill and nominate a Green Party MSP as a Convener of one of the Scottish Parliament's Committees. In return, the two Green MSPs supported the nomination of the leader of the SNP as First Minister and also agreed to support other Ministerial nominations made by the SNP. The Green MSPs were not, however, bound to support the SNP minority government on issues of confidence or supply beyond those nominations.

"2. The two parties agree on the following core issues and commit to working together on them. Both parties:

i) oppose the building of new nuclear power stations;

ii) agree to early legislation to reduce climate-change pollution each year; and

iii) have long believed that Scotland can be more successful with independence and will work to extend the responsibilities of the Scottish Parliament, always trusting the people to decide their constitutional future.

3. Therefore, the Scottish Green Party is committed to supporting the Scottish National Party in the votes for First Minister and Ministerial appointments. For their part, the Scottish National Party agrees to consult Scottish Green Party MSPs in advance regarding the broad shape of each year's legislative and policy programme (together with any key measures announced in-year), and in relation to the substance of the budget process. The Scottish National Party also agrees to nominate a Green Party MSP as Convenor of a subject committee for which the SNP is the nominating Party.

4. In the context of the wider Parliamentary consultation and engagement involving all parties which the SNP wants to see develop, they also agree to give sympathetic consideration to issues raised by the Green Party in Parliament, including via Motions and Members Bills.

5. The SNP and the Scottish Green Party believe this agreement sets an example for the new Parliament of parties working constructively together, seeking consensus and agreement, to deliver a progressive agenda for Scotland. Both Parties will consider further opportunities to work together co-operatively, as other policy issues arise." ⁹

Confidence and supply model

A confidence and supply agreement is a form of limited cooperation agreement, whereby a party with a minority government reaches agreement with another party (or parties) in order to secure a parliamentary majority on issues of confidence in the government and budget/spending priorities (supply). The issues of confidence and supply are critical to a government's survival. The junior party in such a limited cooperation agreement will usually secure government support for a specific policy priority or priorities in return for supporting the government on these issues.

“ A confidence and supply agreement is a limited co-operation arrangement between political parties guaranteeing support for a minority government on parliamentary votes that are critical to the survival of the government – typically formal confidence motions and votes on budgets and spending plans. In return, the support parties can receive different types of specified concessions ¹⁰ ”

A recent example of a confidence and supply arrangement is the agreement between the minority Conservative Party UK Government and the Democratic Unionist Party 'on support for the Government in Parliament' signed in 2017 ¹¹ .

Comprehensive cooperation agreements

In addition to limited cooperation agreements, including those based on the confidence and supply model, more comprehensive cooperation agreements can be reached. Such agreements fall short of full coalition agreements where two or more parties form a coalition government, but they may include the junior party gaining Ministerial positions.

The shape and scope of each agreement is unique and, as a result, how they work in practice can differ. An agreement of this kind is, however, likely to make clear in which policy areas the parties are going to work together, and what the limits of cooperation are.

Examples of such agreements include the one in place in [New Zealand](#) and the one between the [Scottish Government and the Greens](#).

The New Zealand cooperation agreement

A cooperation agreement between the [New Zealand Labour Party and the Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand](#) is in place at present.¹² This agreement was formed in October 2020 following the general election in New Zealand.

The Labour Party won a majority in the election but decided to invite the Greens into a cooperation agreement. The Labour Party stated that this would allow the New Zealand Government to benefit from the expertise of Green party members in areas such as the environment, climate change and child wellbeing.¹²

Under the agreement, two members of the Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand became Ministers in the New Zealand Government. The agreement sets out the procedures that the two parties will follow in order to work effectively together in areas of shared interest. It also makes clear in which areas cooperation has been agreed, and that there will be collective responsibility in delivering these. What this means is that all decisions reached by Ministers in areas of shared interest, individually or collectively, are binding on all members of the Government. The agreement also sets out a 'no surprises' approach to parliamentary business.¹² These aspects of the cooperation agreement are very similar to that in place between the Scottish Government and the Greens.⁷

The agreement, and by extension collective responsibility, is however linked to just three areas of common interest:

- Achieving the purpose and goals of the Zero Carbon Act through decarbonising public transport, decarbonising the public sector, increasing the uptake of zero-emission vehicles, introducing clean car standards, and supporting the use of renewable energy for industrial heat.
- Protecting the environment and biodiversity through working to achieve the outcomes of Te Mana o te Taiao - Aotearoa New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy 2020, protecting Kauri, building on pest management programmes, and taking action to minimise waste and problem plastics.
- Improving child wellbeing and marginalised communities through action on homelessness, warmer homes, and child and youth mental health.

Policy areas not listed in the agreement are excluded from it, and the agreement itself explains that "beyond these stated areas of cooperation, it is also the Government's intention to work with political parties from across Parliament (including the Opposition) on issues that affect our democracy." ¹²

Coalition government

A coalition government is a government formed formally by more than one political party.

¹³ Coalition government are usually formed when no single party has a majority of the seats in parliament and two (or more) parties join forces to build a coalition and form a government together.

Coalition government is different from a government which has a cooperation agreement in place with another party. In coalition, the parties together form the government. In the case of cooperation agreements, a party forms the government and agrees to work with another party or parties. Whilst cooperation agreements sometimes include the junior party gaining Ministerial appointments, coalition governments usually include both parties occupying senior positions within the Cabinet because both parties are formally in government.

Once a coalition is formed, a coalition agreement is developed and published. A coalition agreement sets out how the coalition government will operate on a practical level. It is also usual for it to set out areas what the priorities of the coalition government will be. A coalition agreement is likely to be in place for a specified period of time, such as session of parliament.

“ This document sets out how we expect our Coalition Government to operate in practice and the basis upon which the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Parliamentary Parties will jointly maintain in office Her Majesty's Government. It reflects the agreements reached by our Parliamentary Parties. We expect it to endure for the duration of the present Parliament. ¹⁴ ”

In 1999 and 2003 the Scottish Government (then called the Scottish Executive) was formed by [coalitions between the Scottish Labour Party and the Scottish Liberal Democrats](#). In 2010 the UK was also governed by a [coalition government, formed by the Conservative and Liberal Democrat parties](#).

Previous coalition governments in the UK

Since devolution in 1999, there have been three examples of coalition governments formed in Scotland and the UK. These are:

- [Scottish Parliament 1999-2003: Scottish Labour Party and the Scottish Liberal Democrats](#)
- [Scottish Parliament 2003-2007: Scottish Labour Party and the Scottish Liberal Democrats](#)
- [UK Parliament 2010-2015: Conservative Party and the Liberal Democrats](#)

Scottish Parliament 1999-2003: Scottish Labour Party and the Scottish Liberal

Democrats

The Scottish Government was known as the Scottish Executive when it was established in 1999 following the first elections to the Scottish Parliament. The Scottish Labour Party won 56 seats in the 1999 election, nine short of an overall majority. It agreed to enter a coalition with the Scottish Liberal Democrats who had won 17 seats. The SNP, with 35 seats, formed the official opposition.

Scottish Parliament 2003-2007: Scottish Labour Party and the Scottish Liberal Democrats

The 2003 Scottish Parliament elections also resulted in a position where no single party held a majority of seats. The Scottish Labour Party, who won 50 seats again formed a coalition agreement with the Liberal Democrats, who were unchanged on 17 seats. The two parties formed the Scottish Executive.

The 2003 elections returned a wide range of parties, including 3 independents, a seat for the Scottish Senior Citizens and 5 seats for the Scottish Socialists alongside the more traditional parties.

UK Parliament 2010-2015: Conservative Party and the Liberal Democrats

Following the general election in 2010, no party held a majority of seats. The Conservative Party finished as the largest party, winning 306 seats, but they finished 20 seats short of a majority. The Labour Party finished with 258 seats, a fall of 91 seats over the 2005 election.

The resulting “hung parliament” placed the Liberal Democrats, with 57 seats, as potentially holding the balance of power. After a period of negotiation, the Liberal Democrats joined the Conservatives in a coalition government led by David Cameron, who became prime minister on May 11, and Nick Clegg, who became deputy prime minister.

The Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government was the first to form the UK Government since the First World War. The parties involved [published their agreement](#), as well as a [joint programme for government](#).

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