

Unleash the power of Scotland's food

FareShare Scotland manifesto for the
2026 Scottish Parliament elections



Foreword

At FareShare, we believe passionately in the power of food. We see the difference food makes in communities every single day: bringing people together, creating opportunities, changing lives.

Our work starts from the need to tackle the problem of food waste. Globally, wasted food causes three times as many greenhouse gases as the entire aviation industry. We can turn this problem into an opportunity, getting good-to-eat food to where it's needed most.

This manifesto sets out our calls to action for all parties leading up to the Scottish Parliament elections in May.

FareShare Scotland is Scotland's leader in redistributing surplus food, last year, distributing more than 10 million meals through over 600 Scottish charities and community groups.

Many of those are on the frontline of the cost-of-living crisis, helping people who face the awful choice between heating and eating.

FareShare Scotland will always put dignity at the heart of our work. The charities we support help to tackle the root causes of people's poverty or isolation, as well as meeting their immediate needs.

We know there's a lot more we can do. At a UK level, we're building a new national charity by merging FareShare and the Felix Project to grow our impact. We need action by the next Scottish Government to unlock more surplus food and ensure communities are well supported.

We are calling on all parties in the Holyrood elections to back us in our mission. We are ready to unleash the power of Scotland's food; and you can help us.



Kris Gibbon-Walsh
CEO, FareShare

FareShare Scotland calls on the next Scottish Government to:

Fight Food Waste

- Take a whole supply-chain approach to meeting food waste targets
- Deliver a surplus subsidy scheme and connect this into wider food system support
- Require food businesses to report their food surplus and waste
- Clarify legal protections for food redistribution

Build Stronger Communities

- Boost household incomes through fair work and social security
- Ensure people can access food with dignity when they get into crisis.
- Work with FareShare and food industry partners to deliver effective employability programmes
- Continue to support FareShare Scotland and work with councils to support the community food sector.



Who we are

FareShare Scotland is the country's leading food redistribution charity, harnessing the power of food to change lives.

We work with four network partners - Cyrenians based in Edinburgh, Move On in Glasgow, Transform Community Development in Dundee, and CFINE in Aberdeen and Tain - who collectively support more than 600 charities and community groups in every part of Scotland.

Last year, the surplus food they redistributed provided more than 10 million meals and would have cost £13 million to buy.



Why our work matters

Food is a human right yet nearly one in seven people in Scotland can't afford enough healthy food to meet their needs.

At the same time, an estimated 200,000 tonnes of edible food is thrown away each year before it reaches people's shopping bags. That's enough to make almost half a billion meals and is a key driver of greenhouse gas emissions. Redistributing this food can transform lives while protecting the planet and ensuring the wellbeing of future generations.

Our charity partners do much more than feed people, whether that's offering financial advice, providing childcare, supporting healthier diets, or reducing loneliness and isolation – all vital to creating a fairer, happier, more sustainable Scotland.

People who are supported by our charity partners tell us they eat more nutritious food, skip fewer meals, feel healthier, and experience a stronger sense of connection to their communities.

By adopting policies that support surplus food redistribution, the next Scottish Government can help reduce environmental impact, improve people's access to good food, and ensure stronger local communities.

Fighting food waste

Take a whole-system approach to food waste

Scotland is missing its food waste reduction targets, so a new approach is needed. This needs to be a whole-system approach which recognises that all food losses have an economic and social cost as well as an environmental one. The next Scottish Government should reflect this when setting new circular economy targets and it should set clear expectations on each part of the supply chain to achieve them. This should also include extending the scope of the targets to also include food losses from farms and primary producers.

Deliver a surplus subsidy scheme

We know it's massively better if surplus food feeds people, rather than feeding animals or biowaste facilities, but getting food to people costs more.

The Scottish Government has previously supported FareShare Scotland's Surplus with Purpose scheme - a proven subsidy scheme that levels the playing field for farmers and food producers so they can redistribute food that would have otherwise gone to less beneficial outcomes. We call on the next Scottish Government to continue to support this scheme and begin to embed it into wider food system supports.

Make mandatory food waste reporting meaningful

The Scottish Government's circular economy routemap commits to introducing regulations which would require some businesses to report their food surplus and waste by 2026. This should be an early priority. While it may be appropriate to take a proportionate approach depending on the size and nature of different businesses, the scope of any regulations must not be made too narrow, or they will deliver little actual change. It will also be important to align with reporting requirements those in England and Wales wherever possible and to provide effective support and signposting to businesses to help them take action.



Clarify legal protections around using surplus food

While many businesses have embraced the opportunity to donate surplus food, some have voiced concerns about the potential legal implications of doing so. Food safety laws still apply when food is donated and a perception that they could be open to legal action may be a barrier for firms who would otherwise donate their surplus. The next Scottish Government should work with Food Standards Scotland and Zero Waste Scotland to clarify the legal position and produce clear, up to date guidance.

Building stronger communities

End the need for food banks

FareShare meets people where they are and so long as people struggle to access healthy, affordable food, we will continue to support them. However, we know that redistributing food is not a lasting solution to food insecurity, as it does not by itself address the causes of poverty. That's why what we do is about much more than providing food. We support holistic services in local communities that work to address diverse needs. The next Scottish Government should continue to boost household incomes through fair work and social security and ensure people can access food with dignity when they do get into crisis.

Support the community food sector

Scotland's diverse community food sector should be celebrated for its role in strengthening and creating cohesive communities. Grassroots organisations rooted in communities can be central to the vision of a Good Food Nation. However, too many are struggling with cost pressures, scarce funding and increasing demand. The next Scottish Government should continue to support FareShare Scotland and it should work with councils to invest in and support community food organisations. This should include supporting social dining spaces, such as 'Public Diners'. It should also ensure that food is integral to national and local application of Community Wealth Building legislation.

Support skills and apprenticeships

Skills shortages throughout the food supply chain harm the sector's productivity and they can contribute to increased food waste. The reach of FareShare Scotland's network presents an opportunity to deliver meaningful employability programmes that are national in scale and supported by major food industry partners, whilst also being responsive to local need.

We want to work with the next Scottish Government to build on our successes in this area. Reforming how the Apprenticeship Levy can be used could enable charities like FareShare and our partners to grow our impact. We believe the Levy should cover periods of off-site training, encompass high-quality pre-employment courses, and include shorter apprenticeships, and the next Scottish Government should work with the UK Government to deliver this.



Contact



Jon Molyneux,
FareShare Scotland
Jon.molyneux@fareshare.org.uk