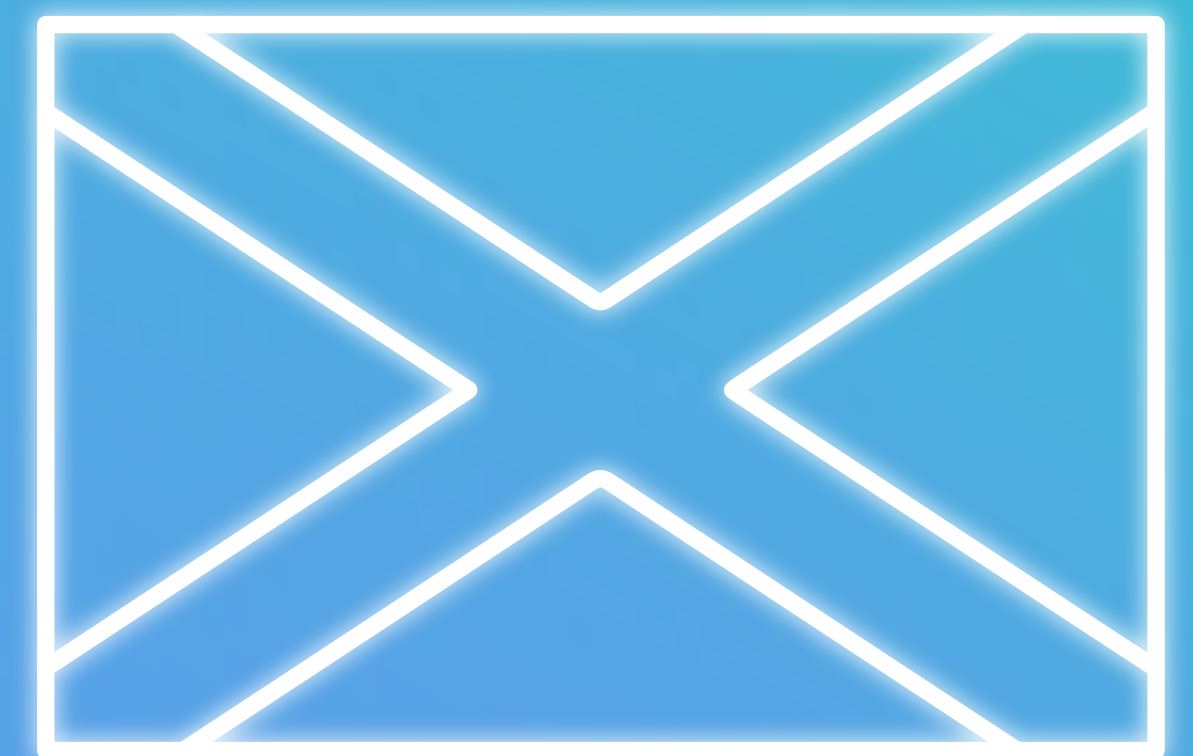/ Democratise Data Manifesto for 2021 Scottish Parliament Elections

#DemocratiseDataPledge

DMA Scotland Democratise Data Manifesto for Scottish Parliament Elections 2021

Support us by taking the #DemocratiseDataPledge

With a month to go until the Scottish Parliament Elections on May 6, debate has flourished about the future of Scotland at this pivotal time.

While there a myriad of political and constitutional questions up for debate, there is clear unity in the desire to focus the new parliament on recovery from the coronavirus pandemic.

DMA Scotland and the wider industry share this focus. Indeed, Scotland's data industry has enormous potential to contribute to recovery from coronavirus through supporting individuals to find work and new opportunities; widening access increasing diversity in the industry and job market; and to lead Europe and the wider world in innovative and ethical approaches to the use of data.

To fully realise our collective ambition, Scotland's data economy must recognise the need to continue to embrace fundamental change and reap the rewards investment in data can bring. A key aspect of this is continuing to fund enhanced data skills while adapting the way we nurture talent.

The DMA's **Democratisation of Talent white paper** outlines this debate further and begins discussion on how we might democratise talent in the industry and wider economy.

With this in mind, and looking to the next parliamentary term, DMA Scotland has created a mini-manifesto with five key objectives that will support the industry and the people within it (and, indeed, those not yet within it), and bolster growth in the sector and help achieve bold policy aims in the data sphere.

We ask candidates to take the **#DemocratiseDataPledge** to work towards the objectives outlined, if elected.

Please share your support with the **#DemocratiseDataPledge** hashtag.

While these are difficult times, the scale of the challenge we face is far outstripped by the opportunity to better society for us all, and the DMA and wider industry is eager to play its role.

We wish you a safe and constructive campaign.

DMA Scotland

Objective 1:

Tackle the Reversing of Diversity

In the past decade, the focus on diversity and inclusion (D&I) has grown exponentially. Nonetheless, worrying trends show these efforts to be slowing, particularly in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.

A recent survey by Harnham laid bare the data industry's diversity issues, including a 70/30% job split in favour of men. The report also states three-quarters of roles are held by white men, while just 37% are aged over 35. And, while almost a fifth of the UK workforce state a disability, just 3.3% of data employees do so.

Diversity and inclusion still matter greatly and can power business to recovery: according to the Wall Street Journal, the 20 most diverse companies in the S&P 500 achieved higher operating profit margins than the bottom 20 (12% v 8%). The risk of D&I being side-lined is, therefore, a cause for concern.

Candidate Pledge:

We ask new parliamentarians to commit to stopping the reversal of diversity and inclusion initiatives

Increase Employment in Key Talent Pools

DMA Scotland has identified three key pools employers should tap for talent to create a more diverse workforce and bring in wide-ranging data skills.

Pool One: Starting Out (5 To 24)

- Primary and secondary school
- School leavers
- Vocational
- Apprenticeships

The plight of school leavers is recognised. 13% of 16- to 24-year-olds are unemployed, compared to the UK jobless rate of 4.1%. The Prince's Trust found more than one in three young people have "lost hope" of landing their dream job due to the pandemic.

While at the beginning of their careers, the learning and development and subsequent life-long contribution of those in Pool One could be enormous.

Pool Two: Academia (16 To 30)

- Undergraduate, graduate, post-graduate
- College students and leavers

As one of the groups most badly affected by the shockwaves of Coronavirus, there is a need to raise awareness among employers of skills that are nurtured and developed in the data field across a variety of courses at undergraduate level, and to consider MSc data science courses for potential employees.

Pool Three: Getting On (25 To 60)

- Needing or wanting lifestyle/career change, unaware of choices e.g. ex-military
- Neurodivergent and other diverse groups

Those in Pool 3 make up the vast proportion of the total workforce. They're seeking a change, often through necessity due to their career being cut short by COVID. They're the potential hidden heroes of data: pilots forced out of aviation, oil & gas experts fleeing a burning industry, ex-armed forces personnel who'd be ideal in data-driven jobs.

Candidate Pledge:

We ask prospective parliamentarians to commit to helping those in these Talent Pools get skills training and work in the data and marketing sphere.

Objective 3:

Neurodiversify the Workforce

For our industry, a wealth of untapped talent exists among a more diverse group of people. This is especially the case for neurodivergent people.

For example, it is the case that many with Asperger's and autism can far exceed neurotypical people's performance in data analytics, coding, design, and many other roles in the sector. Similarly, those with ADHD are more adept at utilising creative and unconventional thinking, which can translate into better design and problem-solving.

The DMA's employment guides for Autism, ADHD and Dyslexia employer guides outline how businesses can—and should—do what they can to offer opportunities to and create better working environments for neurodivergent people.

The DMA also supports the calls from neurodiversity charities for a National Autism Commissioner to improve the prospects for those with autism.

Candidate Pledge:

To neurodiversify the workforce, rectify unemployment injustices, and boost economic growth, we ask parliamentarians to increase awareness of the employment gap for neurodivergent people and encourage businesses to improve opportunities and working environments for neurodivergent people.

Identify and Plug the Skills Gap

Too often, data skills are thought of as specialisms in computer science or maths but the lines are increasingly blurred. A thriving data economy requires construction of clear pathways from classroom to boardroom, open to people from all backgrounds. That begins with a debate about what's data, what's digital, and how potential employees can understand the difference to advance their careers.

It matters: Experian research shows 80% of firms rank data as one of their most valuable assets, but only a third (30%) have a formal data literacy programme in place. Data was also ranked by employees as the biggest skills gap in the IDM Professional Skills Census 20185. Urgent investment in ongoing training is required from businesses but isn't always forthcoming: less than a fifth of respondents reported receiving data training by their employer.

Candidate Pledge:

We ask parliamentarians to promote data skills development provision with clear pathways from classroom to boardroom.

Objective 5:

Demystify Data and Improve Data Literacy

Even the word 'data' scares off many people who immediately imagine spreadsheets and complex algorithms. This translates into how people think about their data beinge used by others, too. When it isn't clear how data is being used, it's hard to trust that it is being used fairly.

Some professionals are just as cautious: two-fifths of firms polled by Experian believed their workers don't trust data insights used by their employer.

Greater data literacy would doubtless tackle some of these misgivings and misconceptions. Wider acceptance of data's use in many facets of society would benefit the sector no end.

This reluctance to teach individuals and workers about data as a force for good must be tackled through continued education and advocacy.

Candidate Pledge:

We ask parliamentarians to advocate for programmes to improve data literacy among the general population, and encourage businesses to do the same for their workforce.

Objective 6:

Build on Scotland's Ethical Use of Data and AI

Scotland is world-leading in its aims for data and AI and their use in government, business and wider society. Indeed, the recent launch of the Scottish Government's AI Strategy for Scotland attracted praise from across Europe, the USA, New Zealand, and beyond.

The benefits of these policy aims reach every area of society, from delivery of public services, increased connectivity and access; improvement of commercial products and services; growing employment opportunities and skills development opportunities; and bolstering economic growth.

DMA's Value of Data campaign has worked with Government Ministers, MSPs, educational and research institutions, businesses and individuals to explore how ethics and values stay at the heart of how we develop and use data, AI and tech more broadly.

A plethora of issues have been discussed and debated, but there is much more to explore, and parliamentarians must play a key role.

Canditate Pledge:

For Scotland to continue its great work in this area, and to stay ahead of the curve, we ask parliamentarians to be future-looking to ensure legislation and regulation creates grounds for innovative and ethical development and use of data.

Boost International Data Trade

Scotland, and all nations of the UK, are at an interesting point in their development of relationships around the world. While keeping close ties with Europe, the Scottish Government has proposed expanding its economic and diplomatic footprint further afield.

International engagement and trade with nations and multinational bodies across the globe deepen the talent pool, increase competitivity and widen customer base.

Nonetheless, high standards of privacy and protection and ethical use of data must remain at the core of international trade, so that businesses can flourish and individuals' data is protected.

It is for this reason that the DMA, the Federation of European Data & Marketing Associations (FEDMA); and the Global Data & Marketing Alliance (GDMA)—representing trade bodies from 30 countries and over 15,500 business organisations worldwide—have developed Global Privacy Principles which seek to promote a global approach to improving standards and protecting data.

Candidate Pledge:

When looking to improve Scotland's international trade links in the digital and data sphere, parliamentarians should ensure the spirit of high standards and protection of individuals' data is at the heart of any relationships and agreements.