

Embedded within Catholic Social Teaching is the obligation to exercise our democratic prerogative through voting in the forthcoming UK general election: “All citizens...should be mindful of the right and also the duty to use their free vote to further the common good.” (*Gaudium et Spes*, 75).

We should do so guided by our faith, a central tenet of which is that those elected to positions of power must recognise, respect and uphold the inherent dignity and value of every human being, made in the image and likeness of God, and promote care for creation locally and globally.

The Bishops’ Conference of Scotland does not endorse or promote individual candidates or parties. However, ahead of deciding where to place an X on our ballot papers on July 4, the *Catholic Parliamentary Office* and *Justice and Peace Scotland* have prepared questions for candidates to complement the themes of the Catholic Bishops of Scotland’s Pastoral Letter. Asking candidates for their responses to these questions can help inform how we observe Church teaching in our electoral choices. If you are unable to question candidates in person, contact details can be found for those standing in your area on the CPO website (<https://rcpolitics.org/general-election-2024/>). Consulting party manifestos may give insight into party stances on these themes.

## **HUMAN LIFE**

Will you place the intrinsic value and dignity of the human person at the heart of all your political decision making and vote to protect human life and dignity in all contexts?

Will you support social policies that will allow people in need, such as vulnerable mothers and their babies, the elderly, or terminally ill and their families to have access to quality support and care?

Will you reject dangerous proposals to legalise assisted suicide and commit to improvements in palliative care to meet the needs of vulnerable people at the end of life?

*(Note: although abortion and assisted suicide are devolved matters, it is helpful to know candidates’ positions on these issues).*

## **MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY**

Changes to the tax and benefit systems in recent years have significantly impacted the incomes of families with children, what are your plans to reform the current systems to make them fairer for families?

## **POVERTY AND IMMIGRATION**

What will you do to address unprecedented at-home poverty across our society, where two million people use food banks every week, 30% of children live in poverty and over seven in ten low-income families across the UK are going without essentials each week?

Do you support the removal of the unjust two-child cap on Universal Credit payments, which significantly impacts the poorest and also those with larger families?

Do you condemn the hostile environment approach to migration, asylum seekers and refugees with its inflammatory rhetoric that has sown seeds of hatred and division in our communities while destroying compassion for our fellow human beings?

Will you support measures to repeal the cruel Rwanda Act, Illegal Migration Act and Nationality and Borders Act and instead champion the establishment of more safe routes to the UK for those fleeing violence and oppression?

## **THE ENVIRONMENT**

What steps will you take to ensure that the UK upholds its international legal obligations under the Paris Agreement to ensure that global temperature increases do not rise above 1.5 °C?

Do you accept that prohibition of new coal, oil and gas developments and licences are essential to ensure the UK achieves net-zero by 2050, and how would you deliver a just transition away from fossil fuels to ensure workers in fossil fuel related industries are protected?

## **FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND CONSCIENCE**

Freedom of thought, conscience and religion are fundamental human rights which are protected in various international legal treaties, including the European Convention of Human Rights. Are you committed to ensuring the UK remains a signatory of the Convention, alongside almost every other country in Europe?

## **WAR AND NUCLEAR WEAPONS**

To what extent are you committed to non-violent solutions to conflict, and will you champion the UK as a peace-making nation committed to protecting human life when war and violence occur?

What are your plans to advocate for justice and peace in countries where conflict is currently present, including in The Holy Land and Ukraine?

Do you reject the immoral existence of nuclear weapons and the profits-before-human-lives activities of the UK arms trade and are you in favour of working alongside other nations on the path to nuclear disarmament, including the signing of the Treaty on the Prohibition of nuclear weapons?

