

Scottish Young Greens

Constitution – Annotated

Drafted February 2015 (this line will be removed from final document)
Adopted XXXX XXXX

NOTE – This document is not the constitution itself. It is an annotated version, with comments (in red) provided to clarify points or explain the reasoning behind certain articles where it was felt necessary. Italics are where there are additions or changes compared to our existing constitution.

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1. **Definitions**

- 1.1. Scottish Young Greens (SYG) is the self-organising youth organisation of the Scottish Green Party.
- 1.2. In terms of Scottish Green Party's (SGP) own Constitution, SYG is a representative group with associated rights and responsibilities. (see Appendix A, "SGP Constitution, Section 5, Representative Groups")

2. **Membership**

- 2.1. Membership of the SYG is open to any one aged 16-30 inclusive, except people who are members of a UK political party (*or the youth organisation of such*) other than the SGP or other UK Green Parties.
- 2.2. *Ordinary members* of SYG do not need to be members of the SGP.
Successive SYG councils have voted to keep SYG and SGP membership separate – we do not believe there should be a financial barrier for young people wanting to engage in politics.
- 2.3. An individual's membership of SYG can be terminated by a two-thirds majority vote of SYG council *if*;
 - 2.3.1. Their membership is considered to be detrimental to the work of the SYG
and
 - 2.3.2. *Appropriate action has already been taken by the SYG Support Officer but has failed to resolve the issue.*
The current constitution allows council sole power to terminate SYG membership. It was felt this was somewhat authoritarian – there is an additional protection now provided by requiring the Support Officer to go

through a resolution process before council can vote on the issue.

3. Purposes

3.1. *The primary purpose of the SYG will be to encourage and promote youth engagement with Green politics at all levels in Scotland. We will provide opportunities to do so, with a focus on issues including social justice, the environment and democracy, through a variety of means including*

3.1.1. *Electing Greens at all levels, in particular to student and youth bodies*

3.1.2. *Participating in or leading issue-based campaigns at local, national or global level*

3.2. To raise funds to pursue SYG purposes

3.3. To be an efficient and self-sustaining organisation with a clear, accessible structure and decision making processes *with the necessary autonomy to develop these structures (including IT) to suit our unique needs, and without undue reliance on the SGP.*

Basically, the addition in italics here asserts our right to run our own dashed mailing list and IT systems should we feel that the party's are not meeting our needs.

3.4. To represent Young Greens views to SGP, including bringing forward SYG policy motions to SGP conference as desired.

3.5. To represent SGP to Young Greens and encourage Young Greens to join SGP.

4. Council

4.1. SYG members will elect an SYG Council Yearly at an Annual General Meeting (AGM). There will be at least four weeks notice given of the date and venue for the AGM and a note of posts for election and associated job descriptions circulated. SYG Council will meet quarterly, one of which will be the AGM.

4.2. Responsibilities

4.2.1. *SYG Council will be responsible for the efficient running of SYG as a whole,*

4.2.2. *Co-ordination between Area Groups, and*

4.2.3. *To be a central point of contact for SGP and the wider public.*

4.3. Membership

4.3.1. Membership of SYG Council will comprise Elected Officers and Area Organisers nominated by Area Groups to represent them on council. Current Elected Officers and their responsibilities will be recorded and *publicly available on the SYG website.*

4.3.2. *SYG Council shall be convened by two gender balanced co-convenors, who must belong to different area groups.*

The rationale behind requiring the co-convenors to be split between groups is that it can be difficult to effectively organise in other parts of the country if there is too much concentration of council members in one area – something this year's council are all too aware of.

4.3.3. *SYG Secretary shall act as the main point of contact between SYG and external groups, and manage SYG membership information.*

4.3.4. *SYG Elections & Campaigns Officer shall co-ordinate SYG action in support of SGP Election Campaigns, and represent SYG on SGP's Elections and Campaigns Committee (ECC).*

This and the secretary roles have been added as "constitutional" positions

for the first time as it is recognised that they are essential roles for effective operation of the SYG.

4.3.5. *Other Council Officer positions may be created as desired subject to a vote by SYG Council. These positions shall not have voting rights unless they have been confirmed and elected by SYG AGM.*

The first part allows creation of new roles as may be considered important – such as communications or international. The second part is to make sure that such roles have democratic legitimacy, and that (not that anyone would, I'm sure!) council does not add roles and put people in them to further any kind of personal/group agenda.

4.3.6. *There shall also be an SYG Support Officer. The support officer shall act as a point of contact for members who have concerns about any part of SYG. The SYG support officer will have the right to attend council but will not have a vote.*

The Support Officer role is outlined in greater detail in referenced documents, but basically they exist to resolve any conflicts between members and ensure that the SYG is a safe space for all by dealing with any behaviour that may be considered bullying. As the support officer is responsible for processes which may lead to expulsion of a member, and for relaying any concerns members have about SYG council itself, it would be inappropriate for them to then be able to vote as part of council.

4.3.7. *Should one individual hold more than one council position, they shall have only one vote. The quorum for SYG Council decisions will be four voting Council members, from at least two different area groups.*

4.4. Elections to SYG Council

4.4.1. To be eligible for election to SYG Council, a prospective member must also be a member of the SGP.

4.4.2. *Each candidate must make a statement to and answer questions from attendees at the AGM. If a candidate cannot attend the AGM, they may submit a written statement to be made available to attendees. If there is more than one person standing for a post, candidates will be elected by alternative vote. Where there is only one candidate for a post, they must achieve support from a simple majority of attendees.*

4.4.3. All SYG members attending AGM have one vote for each election.

4.4.4. We will strive to ensure gender balance on Council. *Mechanisms shall be put in place for elections to ensure that, so long as there are enough candidates to achieve this goal, at least 40% of Elected Officers shall be non-male. Non-voting members will count towards this figure.*

40% has been selected rather than 50% as (assuming that the number of Elected Officers doesn't exceed 9 people – which it really shouldn't!) an even number of council positions will always end up with at least 1:1 male:non-male gender balance but an odd number would (if we used 50%) always force males into the minority. It should be pointed out that is not necessarily an awful thing in and of itself – merely that it is likely to be seen as unfair.

What mechanism, exactly, is used is not explicitly outlined, but an example would be if four males were elected to a council of six members total, then the non-male that came closest to being elected to a position could be selected to provide this gender balance.

4.5. Co-Opting Members to SYG Council

4.5.1. Where there is a vacancy on SYG Council, council may choose to co-opt someone to the position. Co-opted members of council must, as with elected members, be SGP members.

5. *Local Area Groups*

5.1. SYG Area Groups must have autonomy to decide which purposes and issues to priorities. *As part of the Green commitment to localism, SYG recognises that one size will not fit all.*

5.2. *Formation*

5.2.1. A group of *ten or more* SYG members in a particular geographical area can make a formal request to SYG Council to be constituted as a Local Area Group. *SYG Council shall, where requested, facilitate the foundation of a Local Area Group by contacting members in the proposed coverage area to gauge support for such a group.*

Upped to ten from two because at the size of membership we have now it simply isn't feasible to let every town or village across the country with two young greens in it set itself up as a group. The addition in italics at the end is to recognise that people interested in setting up a group may not be able to contact other members, and puts the onus on SYG council to take reasonable steps to help in such situations.

5.2.2. *If SYG Council by simple majority vote agrees to the foundation of the area group they shall provide SYG members in the prospective coverage area with at least two weeks notice for receipt of nominations for the position of two gender balanced Local Area Organisers.*

5.2.3. *There shall then be a further two week period to allow SYG Council to circulate candidate statements to the membership and conduct elections.*

5.2.4. *Upon successful election of at least one Local Area Organiser, the Local Area Group shall be officially constituted.*

These three bits effectively mean that, when setting up an area group, council is required to be the body that carries out elections as there will be no existing local group infrastructure able to do so. The requirement is to elect "at least one" organiser because a potential local area group should not be prevented from existing if initially unable to produce a gender balanced team – although it is, of course, desirable that it does so.

5.3. *Local Area Organisers*

5.3.1. *The Local Area Organisers shall act as the point of contact between SYG nationally and the Local Area Group, as well as between the Local Area Group and the Local SGP branch.*

5.3.2. *The Local Area Organisers shall be entitled to one vote on SYG Council. In the event that both organisers attend a meeting of SYG Council, only one may vote. At council, Local Area Organisers should represent the views of their Local Area Group, not their own individual views. As this role entitles them to a position on council, Local Area Organisers must be members of SGP.*

There are two reasons for only giving one vote – firstly, that since an area group only requires one area organiser, it would give those that have two more say, which would be unfair. Secondly, allowing both organisers a vote would cause "bloat" in the size of Council membership. It should be noted this is how SYG Co-Convenors work at SGP Council – they have one vote between them, not one each.

5.4. Structure & Elections

5.4.1. *The structure of Local Area Groups is a matter for that group to decide for themselves. The only constitutional requirements are to have at least one local area organiser and that decisions on structure are taken democratically by the membership.*

This means local area groups can create committees and officer positions as they feel they need to, but a local area organiser cannot unilaterally do so. As the structure of local groups is up to them and not part of SYG council, any such positions created by a local group should be open to all members, not just those who also have SGP membership.

5.4.2. *Once a Local Area Group has been officially constituted, it shall then be responsible for carrying out elections for Local Area Organisers and any other positions that it should choose to create on an annual basis.*

5.4.3. *SYG Council shall be notified of the results of these elections, and the list of positions made publicly available on the SYG Website.*

5.5. SYG Council shall be required to keep Local Area Groups, through their Local Area Organisers, informed of SYG Council Meeting Agendas to enable the groups to agree their position on the issues expected to arise.

As local area organisers are expected to represent the views of their local area group at council meetings, the group needs to be aware of what is being discussed at council.

5.6. By agreeing to constitute itself as an SYG Area Group, Local Area Groups agree to accept the philosophical basis of the SGP (see Appendix B "Excerpt from SGP Constitution Foreword") , and to abide by the terms of the SYG Constitution.

5.7. Local Area Groups can be wound up by the decision of their own local membership and then SYG Council must be informed in writing and give their approval. SYG Council can decide a Local Area Group should be wound up if it has been defunct for a significant period (for example, a year) and has no named Local Area Organiser.

5.8. Disassociation.

5.8.1. SYG Council can decide to remove the status of a Local Area Group *by a two-thirds majority vote*, if it decides that the Group has not abided by the terms above.

5.8.2. *If SYG Council considers that the events leading to disassociation of a Local Area Group are particularly severe and may bring the SYG or the SGP into disrepute it may, by a two-thirds majority vote, choose to seek action by the SGP to resolve the problem.*

This is kind of a "nuclear option" – and the gravity of it is shown by the fact it takes two separate two-third majority votes to get this far. The only kind of scenario that would likely provoke this would be where a local area group has become the victim of "entryism" from another group - that would likely require disassociation from SYG and a request to the SGP to act to revoke party membership from the individuals in question.

6. Managing Funds

6.1. SYG Funds will be kept as a separate line in SGP main bank account.

6.2. SYG will negotiate annually with SGP operations Committee for funds to be allocated for SYG activity.

6.3. A separate Managing Funds document can be created to lay out in greater

detail the procedures for managing finances.

6.4. *Any funds raised by SYG shall be used for official SYG purposes only.*

7. Relationship with Scottish Green Party

7.1. SYG has the right to nominate a member to sit on SGP's Elections and Campaigns Committee. This person shall be whoever is elected to the SYG Elections Officer role at AGM.

7.2. SYG can nominate a member to sit on SGP Council and this member will by default be the Convenor, or one of the Co-Convenors. Another representative from SYG who is also a member of SGP can be nominated by Council to represent SYG at SGP Council if the Convenor is unable to attend

8. Amending the Scottish Young Greens Constitution

8.1. The Constitution can be amended at the AGM by a two thirds vote of all SYG members in attendance (abstentions are counted as a no vote). Proposed written amendments to the Constitution must be circulated two weeks in advance via email.

APPENDIX A – "SGP Constitution, Section 5, Representative Groups"

5 Representative Groups

The Scottish Green Party welcomes the formation of Representative Groups.

5.1 Definition

A Representative Group is defined as a group whose main aim is to encourage greater participation amongst groups that are currently under-represented within the Scottish Green Party membership, and/or on Scottish Green Party bodies.

5.2 Minimum Membership

A Representative Group may be formed with a minimum of four members.

5.3 Scottish Green Party Council Approval

A Representative Group should submit a statement of its aims to Scottish Green Party Council for approval. Once approved a Representative Group must submit a statement of its aims to the Party newsletter and invite participation from those whose interests the Representative Group is intended to promote and any other Scottish Green Party members as the Representative Group sees fit. A Representative Group must provide a full description of activities when asked to do so by Scottish Green Party Council.

5.4 Membership

Membership of a Representative Group should be open to any Scottish Green Party member from the group that it is intended to promote and any other Scottish Green Party members each Representative Group deems appropriate.

5.5 Officers

Each Representative Group shall have a Convenor. If the Representative Group chooses to operate its own bank account it shall also have a Treasurer. The responsibility of each post is as follows:

5.5.1 Convenor

The Convenor shall have responsibility for:

ensuring that Representative Group meetings are properly chaired and organised and

members notified,
ensuring that the Scottish Green Party Council is kept informed of Representative Group activities,
keeping members informed as to decisions made by the Scottish Green Party Council and Operations Committee that are relevant to the Representative Group.

5.5.2 Treasurer

The Treasurer shall have responsibility for ensuring that the Representative Group accounts are properly kept, and for reporting to the Scottish Green Party Treasurer.

5.6 Financial Management

A Representative Group may choose to operate its own bank account with approval from the Scottish Green Party Council. If a Representative Group chooses to operate its own bank account it shall:

elect a Treasurer,
send annual accounts to Scottish Green Party Treasurer within two months of the financial year end,
keep accounting records in accordance with guidance from Scottish Green Party Treasurer,
keep accounting records for 6 years and forward all records to Scottish Green Party Treasurer in the event of a Representative Group ceasing to exist.

Appendix B "Excerpt from SGP Constitution Foreword"

Foreword

The Scottish Green Party exists in order to work towards a nonviolent, democratic, just and sustainable society and, to that end, to contest elections to all levels of government in Scotland.

This constitution enables the Scottish Green Party to pursue those aims and is based on the principles of:

Participatory Democracy

All party structures are accessible, open and responsive so as to encourage and enable party members to participate fully in decision-making.

Accountability

All party officers and party bodies are fully accountable to the party membership.

Subsidiarity

Decision making is undertaken at the most local level possible.

Equality of Opportunity

Equality of opportunity is promoted within party structures and reflected in party bodies.

The structure of the party is designed to encourage and enable party members to participate in decision-making as fully as they wish and to ensure that all decisions reflect the voice of the membership.

The structure is also designed to work effectively so as to use the resources of the Party responsibly.

The Scottish Green Party works to the same principles as the Global Green Charter, viz.

Ecological Wisdom

Social Justice

Participatory Democracy

Non-violence

Sustainability

Respect for diversity

These principles are expectations within the party itself as well as in the wider world we envisage.