

[00:00:17.650] - VO

On the Engender, Scotland's Feminist Policy podcast.

[00:00:27.660] - Alys Mumford

Hello and welcome to On the Engender, Scotland's Feminist Policy podcast, I'm Alys Mumford from Engender, and I'm here with my wonderful co-host, Amanda Stanley.

[00:00:35.430] - Amanda Stanley

Hello.

[00:00:36.510] - Alys Mumford

And we're also joined today by Emma Ritch, Engender's Executive Director. Hi Emma.

[00:00:40.860] - Emma Ritch

Hi there.

[00:00:41.940] - Alys Mumford

And Engender's Policy and Parliamentary manager, Eilidh Dickson. Hi, Eilidh.

[00:00:45.750] - Eilidh Dickson

Hello.

[00:00:46.890] - Amanda Stanley

So today we're recording an election special ahead of the Scottish Parliament election on May the 6th. A quick disclaimer, we're discussing issues of women's equality at the election. We are, of course, not suggesting who you should be voting for. But before we get into them discussions, shall we talk about some positive news this week?

[00:01:05.580] - Alys Mumford

Yes, let's do that.

[00:01:07.530] - Amanda Stanley

Alys, you can begin.

[00:01:11.130] - Alys Mumford

[Laughter] Oh no! I'm sorry, I've really, really tried. I was even just going through a website called goodnews.com to try and find things. And there's lots about animal bridges in the US and some stuff around Dick Van Dyke. I maybe should have found a UK specific website. So I'm going to go with another self-indulgent good thing, in that it is warm enough to swim in the sea without like being the only person in the sea, which is very nice [laughter], and to be in there for more than about five minutes, which has been my record previously. So yes, sorry to people that don't live by the coast, but a bit of sea swimming has been my good thing for this week. How about you, Emma Ritch?

[00:01:54.270] - Emma Ritch

Wow, this last couple of weeks has been quite a desert of good news, I think [Laughter]. So, unfortunately, my good thing is very much tinged with sadness, as it's about Dame Shirley Williams who died this week. She was a good thing, though, for being a trailblazer for women in politics. And this week, a lot of women have been sharing what she meant to them, both in her stiletto based direct action against sexual harassment and assault within the Houses of Parliament, and also in her capacity as a mentor, a role model and a woman who was very interested in the needs and lives of other women. I think her life and work speaks directly to the need for more women, and a diversity of women, in politics.

[00:02:37.470] - Alys Mumford

Absolutely, a great one, and that reminded me of a good, sorry I'm going to jump in with another good one, but a tweet I saw about a different Shirley, about Shirley Jackson, which was a letter shared from her where she responded to someone who didn't like her writing by saying, "If you don't like my

peaches, don't shake my tree", which is just an excellent motto for life [laughter], so I enjoyed seeing that on Twitter today. Eilidh, have you got something good you can share with us?

[00:03:03.850] - Eilidh Dickson

Oh, how do I follow that? So the only thing I could think of, I really, really tried, is that Yoga with Adrienne this week is all about rest, which basically means I've got a thirty five minute designated nap every day. So that's one good thing. [Laughter]

[00:03:21.870] - Alys Mumford

That's great.

[00:03:22.720] - Eilidh Dickson

It's very good.

[00:03:23.820]

Amanda, anything from you?

[00:03:25.170] - Amanda Stanley

Yes. I guess mine's also activity based in that my five-a-side started back again, which has been nice. I realised the last, the last time I kicked a football, at five-a-sides or seven-a-sides, was last International Women's Day. That was the final time I kicked a football. And then now, obviously with some restrictions easing, we've managed to get back together and start doing it. But it felt so nice to have, like, just a bunch of friends on the pitch and kicking a ball about. It was snowing, but it was also sunny and everyone was just extremely enthusiastic to be outside and like you know, having a purpose you know in terms of playing a game of football. And yeah, the only weird thing I would say is that where we play, they had like a social distancing officer who was doing rounds the pitch [Laughter]. And so there was this person in a hi-vis jacket just making sure that no one was getting like too hands on with it, because you have to still kind of be distanced. But it was like the closest thing to normality that I've had in such a long time, and it just it was so, so good. Apart from the man in the hi-vis that was like watching.

[00:04:34.410] - Alys Mumford

Well, I feel like I might have found my new and only role in a football team, which is the hi-vis person [Laughter], enforcing distancing.

[00:04:42.900] - Amanda Stanley

One of my friends, one of my friends at the end, she was just like I just assumed it was a talent scout, I was like well they wouldn't be looking - [Laughter] [inaudible 00:04:48] - trust, they would not have been looking at our pitch. But no, that's my good news, is that it was yeah, it's really nice to see these things coming back again, yeah.

[00:05:02.680] - Alys Mumford

So I should say we do joke about how we find it quite hard to find good news, and if any listeners find good things, please do feel free to send them through to us, tweet @EngenderScot or drop us an email. You know, it's nice to focus on the positive sometimes, but it can be tricky sometimes.

[00:05:25.270] - Amanda Stanley

Most definitely.

[00:05:25.270] - Alys Mumford

So on to the election special, Amanda, over to you.

[00:05:28.750] - Amanda Stanley

Yes, so we're recording this on the 13th of April and it's just a few weeks out from the Holyrood election on the 6th of May. Eilidh, let's start with yourself, as our Parliamentary and Policy manager, you've been very busy over the past two months talking to political parties, trying to get them to think about gender when drafting their manifestos. Engender also launched our own manifesto at the start

of the month. And so for any non-election geeks listening, can you tell us what manifestos are, and why are they important?

[00:05:57.850] - Eilidh Dickson

So, I can give a very long or very short answer to this question. A manifesto is, very basically, a party's written campaign for an election. So they're setting out their vision of what a Scottish Government that they would run, would sound like, look like, prioritise. And it includes their key messages and an outline of the policy areas right across government, the decisions they would make within those. So the policy and spending decisions that they will prioritise, legislation they want to bring in, reforms they might want to make to the way Scotland is governed. And there's different levels of specificity in that. So some manifesto commitments will be very detailed, front and centre offers to voters. We will open a hospital here, something like that. But other parts of the manifesto might be more aspirational or thematic, and they will collectively between the two, run together, run across all the areas that the Scottish Government's making decisions on. And sometimes also relationships with UK or other international decision makers. So that's kind of party manifestos. And because they're sort of an outline offered to voters ahead of the election, we can also use them to hold parties accountable after they are elected or if they are elected. Not only actually if they're in the Scottish Government. So we can check whether parties are campaigning on their own priorities after they've been elected, are they using their MSPs to achieve the things that they said they were going to do at the start of this election campaign? So that's party manifestos. But the term manifesto could also be applied to lots of other documents that bodies beyond political parties might create around elections. So, like you said, Engender and many other non-partisan bodies or third sector organisations, will produce manifestos around election time. And although these documents are really common, many organisations do them every election, they can take lots of different forms. So this could be a publication of different asks of the parties running for elections, like ours is. It could also be describing what different parties are campaigning on, and they can be comprehensive, they can be short one page images. And there's not really a fixed definition of these types of shared campaign documents. However, these manifestos that aren't produced by political parties are different in that they're not addressed to voters. So voters have plenty of access to them and can use them as they see fit. They're really about what we want to see parties committing to and taking action on, once they're elected.

[00:08:12.370] - Alys Mumford

So looking at Engender's own manifesto, Vision for Feminist Recovery, Emma can you run us through the key asks in that, that Engender is making for parties?

[00:08:21.400] - Emma Ritch

So, absolutely Alys. We launched our Gender Matters Roadmap in Glasgow Women's Library in 2017, when we could get together all in a big room. And that followed two years of consultation and engagement with women, with women's groups, and women's and equalities organisations right across Scotland. And that really was because, while as feminists we have a very strong idea about the changes we ultimately want to see in Scotland, the detail of some of the next steps can be a bit harder to describe. And so we generated a map towards women having equal access to power, resources and safety, and we developed calls for big steps towards gender justice that we wanted to see happen by 2030. And our manifesto this time around, is rooted very much in that feminist vision of what Scotland could be, but obviously pays attention to all that has just happened to women's equality and rights, during Covid and during austerity. So the manifesto itself, which Eilidh masterminded the writing of, that has lots of detailed and specific asks that we think will bring about some of the changes which are needed, and move us closer to that vision of women's equality. They're grouped into eight key areas. And I'll just run through them really briskly. The first is a society that values and rewards those who care for us. The second is an economy that works for women, as well as it does for men. Third, a Scotland that eradicates men's violence against women and girls. Four, a Scotland that guarantees women's rights. Five, the highest standard of women's health and wellbeing. Six, a Scotland where women have equal access to decision making. Seven, a Scotland where women have equal use of public space. And eight, a Social Security system that ensures the dignity and security of women. I think that's the closest I'll ever get to, to reading out the football results [Laughter].

[00:10:27.350] - Alys Mumford

Well, that combined with Yoga with Adrienne's instructions to nap, we have really given people an afternoon. [Laughter]

[00:10:38.630] - Emma Ritch

Amazing. So, yeah, all of asks are grouped into those key areas. And I think the broad calls will be really, they'll really strike a tone with women who've been following what Engender's been doing across the last few years, but also what other women's organisations have been doing to advocate for women's equality and rights.

[00:10:57.650] - Amanda Stanley

And we haven't seen any party manifestos yet, have we?

[00:11:01.160] - Eilidh Dickson

No, we have not. Or I think actually that's not true. We have one I think maybe, All for Unity, is the only party that's actually published theirs so far. But apologies if I'm wrong on that. We do have 25, I think, parties standing this year, but we are expecting most of those, if not all of them, to publish their manifestos either this week or next. I think the main parties who were represented in the Parliament before the election, are all lined up to publish their manifestos this week. So you may have them by the time this goes out.

[00:11:27.260] - Alys Mumford

Again for our listeners, we will see those party manifestos. Eilidh, can you just run through what the gender edits will be producing are? So, listeners may have heard us talk about our gender edits before, what do they look like for manifestos?

[00:11:38.750] - Eilidh Dickson

In elections previously, Engender has produced documents that have looked at what all of the different parties are saying about women and girls, gender equality and related concepts. And we've pulled those together in a list, which basically uses kind of word for word summaries of what all the different parties, where different political parties talking about women, the commitments that they're making and how their vision for a government will tackle inequality experienced by women and girls.

[00:12:07.310] - Alys Mumford

Great. And so, although the manifestos haven't come out, do we have any indications as yet, of what they might be saying? I mean, presume Covid is going to form a large part of what folk are talking about this year?

[00:12:18.380] - Eilidh Dickson

Yeah, I mean, parties typically keep their manifestos very close to their chests right up until they're published. So we don't really have any specific indication of what individual parties are going to be across the piece. But all of them have, as you say, announced some policies already or given some indication as part of their campaigning. Yeah, I don't think we can get away from the fact that this is a Covid election. And while parties are going to be thinking about the full four or five years of the next parliament, a lot of the early priorities that we have seen, have been around things like getting the NHS remobilised, support for children and young people learning, in-person education, and some of the commitments around mental health. But we've also seen parties starting to talk about things like human rights and the environment.

[00:12:57.930] - Alys Mumford

Great. Thank you. So as well as producing our own manifesto, Engender worked along with 14 other women's organisations to host a party leaders hustings focussing on women's equality, back at the start of April. And we'll pop a recording of that video in the show notes, if folk want to watch it back. But Emma, what was your reflection on that hustings, and parties talking about women's equality?

[00:13:19.640] - Emma Ritch

So Engender issued the invitation to party leaders to speak at our hustings, and we were really

pleased to have Nicola Sturgeon from the SNP, Lorna Slater from the Scottish Greens, as well as Willie Rennie from the Liberal Democrats, attend. Other parties sent senior women spokespeople. So Jackie Baillie was there from the Labour Party, Rachael Hamilton was that from the Scottish Tories. And I think all of that was a reflection that parties were taking that quite seriously. I hope that reflects that they appreciate how much women want to hear real commitment to our equality and rights, once they publish their manifestos. We had over a hundred questions submitted on topics ranging from men's violence against women, health care and care, education, intersectionality, climate change, equal pay, recovery from Covid. I thought that gave quite a strong sense of what the breadth of issues were that women are engaged by, and why women's equality and rights should be a key consideration as parties finalise and launch their manifestos, and then engage with voters. But I think something for me that underlined the fact that parties are not necessarily connecting with the interests of lots of women out there, was that we heard from a lot of attendees that this was their very first hustings. So what is currently going on in terms of party engagement, is maybe really not landing that well with women?

[00:14:42.740] - Alys Mumford

Yeah, I think that's interesting. I mean, we had almost 500 people sign up to attend, it obviously did resonate, people were excited to have the opportunity to hear party leaders or senior representatives talk about things they cared about. And I certainly had, I mean obviously, all of us at Engender were sort of busy working behind the scenes at the hustings. But I did have a moment about halfway through, when I was like, oh, it's amazing that all of these questions are about women. Because it's, you know, so often you just get one in a hustings, and that's your lot. And you can almost play bingo with, you know, when and if women are going to get mention. So, yeah, it was pretty great to see politicians have to talk, for an hour and a half about what they're going to do for women. And something yeah, the elections, I guess, give us a unique opportunity to do that, and have them all in that one place.

[00:15:30.400] - Amanda Stanley

Yeah, and as you said, Alys, we'll share a recording of that. But I guess, you know, before we round out from this episode, like, where else can our listeners go to find out more information about the election, either Emma or Eilidh, if you want to jump in?

[00:15:45.890] - Eilidh Dickson

Well, I can start, so as I mentioned before, we've done these gender edit documents in the past and we'll be looking to do that, in some form. We've got, as I say, 25 parties running this time. So we want to make sure that that's as user-friendly as possible. But we'll definitely going through all of those manifestos and pulling out key commitments for women and girls.

[00:16:03.950] - Alys Mumford

We'll also be linking to work that other women's organisations are doing around the elections, so that includes their own manifestos, blogs, The Young Women's Movement are doing a great series of blogs. And also things like the Women 5050 campaign, where they've been tallying up the numbers of women representatives, both that are standing, and post-election. They'll be obviously sharing details about the gender balance of our new parliament. So we'll share all of that info on our socials, and website.

[00:16:28.280] - Eilidh Dickson

Also, just take a moment to reflect that last year, the Scottish Parliament passed a law so that all residents in Scotland, or all legal residents, have a right to vote. So the franchise is much, much bigger this election. So, I think we'll see some interesting outcomes as a result of that. But make sure that you are finding out how to get involved at a local level as well.

[00:16:48.080] - Emma Ritch

I suppose I would just add to that that party activity is obviously constrained because of Covid and the ongoing public health measures. So there won't be in-person hustings, and they'll probably be less chapping on doors, but you can absolutely still ask your candidates what they think about the issues you care about. And the best way to do that is probably social media, or by email, or by parties'

websites. So hopefully they'll get you back some answers on the questions you have for them.

[00:17:18.200] - Alys Mumford

We'll put links in the show notes to resources where you can find out who's standing in your area and how to contact them. And we will also save you the joys, for those of you that are election geeks, of running through the Scottish election system on this podcast. But we'll pop some links in the show notes again, where you can watch as many videos as you like about the D'Hondt system, and what that means for how you should be using your votes. Great, that is us. So, we going to leave off as usual with some recommendations. Who wants to kick us off?

[00:17:49.010] - Amanda Stanley

For those of you who maybe aren't aware yet, but on the 20th of May, there's the fifth annual Ailsa McKay Memorial Lecture taking place by the Wise Centre for Economic Justice. And you can register for that online for free. And yeah, I got, I registered my interest already. So a really interesting event obviously online this year, but there's some really incredible guests who are going to be talking, Diane Elson is going to be there.

[00:18:15.500] - Alys Mumford

Fab. Thank you, good recommendation [laughter]. Emma, how about you?

[00:18:19.970] - Emma Ritch

Mine is a little bit decadent. And so I want to recommend a stationery shop,

[00:18:26.400] - Multiple Voices

[Laughter]

[00:18:26.400] - Alys Mumford

Of course!

[00:18:28.250] - Emma Ritch

Based in Edinburgh, and also online that delivers exquisite parcels of stationery and has been a source of great comfort, and joy, and paperclips during Covid lockdown. It's called Library and Archives Paper Company, and it is women-owned and operated, and recommended to you all.

[00:18:47.600] - Alys Mumford

And has been my friend through many things [laughter] [inaudible 00:18:51]

[00:18:53.660] - Emma Ritch

I would have. [Laughter]

[00:18:57.080] - Eilidh Dickson

Oh I know I can recommend, actually. I've already this to Amanda, offline, the magazine for anyone who's interested in women and food, which is maybe a bit of a niche interest. But the magazine Cherry Bomb is having a virtual conference this year. So they've got some free events which are all on US time, but most of them are in the evening, so I'm going to try and go to a few of those, including Ina Garten interviewing Stanley Tucci, which again, very niche, but I'm all in for.

[00:19:23.750] - Emma Ritch

Relevant to all of our interests, surely. [Sounds of agreement]

[00:19:26.690] - Alys Mumford

Indeed, indeed. Great, and my recommendation is very succinct this week, and it is Taylor Swift. That's it. That's all I've got, getting us through.

[00:19:37.610] - Amanda Stanley

Thanks so much to Emma and Eilidh for joining us on this election special. And like Alys had mentioned earlier, we will link to everything in the show notes, including your guide to voting. So make

sure that you're all well equipped before the 6th of May. Be sure to follow us on Twitter @EngenderScot and click subscribe so you don't miss the next episode. And until then, stay safe.

[00:19:58.800]

[Jingle plays out]