Scotland is one of the world’s wealthiest countries. We are rich in human talent and natural resources. We have world-class industries and many economic strengths. We already pay our way for our public services and our welfare system.

Everyone in this debate, whether in favour of independence or not, agrees that we could be a successful independent country.

So there is no question that Scotland can be independent.

We believe that Scotland should be independent.

The referendum on 18 September 2014 is a choice between two futures for our country.

If we vote Yes, we take the next step on Scotland’s journey.

The most important decisions about our economy and society will be taken here in Scotland by the people of Scotland.

Scotland’s future will be in Scotland’s hands.

The Scottish Parliament has already shown us the gains for people and families when decisions are taken in Scotland. Investment in our schools, hospitals and transport. Support for small businesses. Help for people and families through the council tax freeze, free prescriptions and eyes tests and personal care for the elderly. Universal access to university education. Keeping the NHS in public hands.

If we vote No, decisions on tax, the economy and social security will remain in the hands of others. Westminster governments that we often didn’t vote for, making decisions overwhelmingly rejected by people here.

All countries face challenges.

But with independence we will be better equipped to meet the challenges we face and make Scotland the fairer and more successful country we want it to be. We will always have the government that we choose – a government that puts the people of Scotland first.
Scotland has many economic strengths and advantages: natural resources, world-class universities, and world-leading industries like food and drink and life sciences.

Over each of the last 32 years estimates show Scotland has contributed more tax per head than the UK as a whole.

**A more democratic Scotland**

With independence, Scotland will always get the governments we vote for. For half the time since the end of the Second World War Scotland has been governed by Westminster governments with no majority in Scotland. As a result decisions are imposed on Scotland without our support: the “poll tax”; the “bedroom tax”; Trident replacement and privatisation of Royal Mail.

In an independent Scotland, we won’t get every decision right but policies will be pursued in line with the wishes of the people who live here.

The Scottish Parliament has already shown what is possible. Since 1999, it’s delivered free personal care for the elderly, kept our NHS in the public sector and restored free education for our students. With independence the gains of decision-making will be extended to all areas of government.

**A more prosperous country**

Currently Westminster takes key decisions over Scotland’s economic and tax policy. In an independent Scotland we will have the powers to tailor policy to suit our own circumstances rather than being part of an economy which is focussed on London and the South East of England.

Comparable European countries have achieved faster economic growth over the past 30 years so we know what is possible with the full powers of independence.

**A fairer society**

The UK is one of the most unequal societies in the developed world. This is the result of decisions by Westminster governments of different parties over decades.

Charities have estimated that up to 100,000 more children will be in poverty as a result of changes to social security being made by the current UK government.

By contrast, some of the fairest and most successful countries in the world are independent European nations of similar size to Scotland.

An independent Scotland will have powers over welfare and tax to build a fairer country.
SCOTLAND’S FUTURE  The key facts

Independence is about the future and the opportunities Scotland will have to build a more democratic, prosperous and fairer country.

The decisions we take as a nation will determine how successful we are in the years ahead.

We start from a strong position. All sides of the debate agree that Scotland can be a successful independent country – and the facts show that Scotland’s economy and public finances are stronger than the UK’s as a whole.

The evidence also shows that with independence we can boost economic growth, create jobs, and increase opportunities for women through world-class child care.

The debate about independence is a debate about the two futures that Scotland faces – making our own decisions or having them made for us – but knowing the facts about Scotland today shows the strengths we have and the opportunities that independence will bring.

Scotland’s public finances
Scotland can afford to be independent. Our public finances have consistently been healthier than those elsewhere in the UK.

■ In each and every one of the last 32 years, estimates show Scotland has contributed more tax per person than the UK as a whole. In the last year for which figures are available, taxes from Scotland were equivalent to £10,700 per person. The equivalent figure across the UK as a whole was £9,000

■ Over the period from 2007/08 to 2011/12, the amount of public spending as a share of Scotland’s economy (GDP) was estimated to be lower than in the UK as a whole

■ Taking tax and spending together, over the last five years Scotland’s public finances have been stronger than the UK as a whole by a total of £12.6 billion – almost £2,400 per head

■ As a share of our national output, less money is spent in Scotland on social protection, which includes pensions and other welfare spending, than in the UK as a whole. In 2011/12, a lower proportion of Scottish tax revenues was spent on social protection than in the UK as a whole showing Scotland can afford a high quality welfare and pensions system

Scotland’s economy
An independent Scotland would be one of the wealthiest nations in the world.

■ In 2011 Scotland is estimated to have had the eighth highest economic output (GDP) per head in the 34 countries of the OECD (the organisation of developed economic countries)

■ Even without North Sea oil and gas, output per head in Scotland was the third highest of the UK countries and regions – behind only London and the South East
In 2010 Gross National Income per head in Scotland – including the North Sea – was estimated to be about £26,000, compared to around £24,000 for the UK as a whole.

Scotland has a diverse economy with key strengths across a range of sectors such as food and drink, tourism, creative industries, life sciences, universities, financial services and manufacturing.

Scotland is rich in energy with around 25 per cent of Europe’s offshore wind and tidal energy potential, and 10 per cent of Europe’s wave potential. There could be up to 24 billion barrels of recoverable oil and gas remaining in the North Sea with the potential for production to continue for decades to come.

Scotland has more universities in the Times Top 200 world universities per head of population than any other nation.

The evidence shows how independence can improve Scotland’s economy.

- If our economy had grown as fast as other small European countries between 1977 and 2007, our national output per head would now be 3.8 per cent higher, equivalent to an additional £900 per person.
- Analysis shows that reducing corporation tax by up to three percentage points below the UK rate could increase the level of output by 1.4 per cent and boost employment by approximately 27,000 jobs after 20 years.
- Boosting the number of women in the workforce through increased childcare will increase economic output and tax revenues. Matching Swedish rates of female workforce participation would mean an extra £700 million of tax revenue.

The effect of Westminster policy in Scotland

The UK is one of the most unequal countries in the developed world according to the OECD.

- In 2010 it was ranked 28th out of 34 OECD countries in terms of income equality.
- OECD analysis in 2011 showed that, since 1975, income inequality among working age people in the UK increased faster than any other country in the organisation.

In 2011/12, 710,000 people were living in relative poverty in Scotland (including 150,000 children, and 140,000 pensioners). Current Westminster policies are making this worse.

- Current Westminster cuts to social security could remove over £4.5 billion from Scottish households, and the UK Chancellor plans further cuts of £12 billion to welfare.
- Real terms cuts to child benefit will remove £1,100 from families with two children.
- The “bedroom tax” targets 80,000 vulnerable people in Scotland – the majority of whom have a disability. Nine out of ten Scottish MPs opposed this measure but it is still being imposed in Scotland.
SCOTLAND IN NUMBERS

83% * OF THE SCOTTISH POPULATION FEEL THEY HAVE A SCOTTISH NATIONAL IDENTITY

20% * OF THE POPULATION SHARE THEIR SCOTTISH CONNECTION WITH ANOTHER IDENTITY

5.3 MILLION PEOPLE *

16% OF THE POPULATION AGED UNDER 15 (850,000*)

SCOTLAND HAS FIVE UNIVERSITIES IN THE WORLD'S TOP 200,* INCLUDING ST ANDREWS THE THIRD OLDEST UNIVERSITY IN THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING WORLD IF SCOTLAND BECAME INDEPENDENT NOW

194 TH INDEPENDENT COUNTRY TO JOIN THE UN

54 TH MEMBER OF THE COMMONWEALTH

29 TH MEMBER OF THE EU

*SOURCE: 2011 CENSUS
**SOURCE: TIMES HIGHER EDUCATION UNIVERSITY RANKINGS
In the referendum Scotland faces a choice between two futures: one where we decide for ourselves and one where others continue to decide for us.

Independence is not an end in itself. The ability to make our own decisions means that we can shape a different and better Scotland. If we vote No we will remain a peripheral concern for Westminster governments that often, like now, did not win the election in Scotland.

Westminster has created an economy which is one of the most unbalanced and unequal in the developed world. The Westminster Government itself says too much economic activity has been concentrated in London and the South East of England.

The choice for us is how Scotland can have better job opportunities for everyone and long-term economic security. Is it best for our future to continue as an economic region of an unbalanced and unequal Westminster system or to equip ourselves with all the powers of a national economy?

In *Scotland’s Future* we set out how independence can create jobs and build a more secure and sustainable economy.

We can transform childcare, opening up much greater opportunities for women in particular to work, boosting the working population, the economy and tax revenues.

We can give our businesses a competitive edge by cutting corporation tax and Air Passenger Duty, lowering the costs of flights from Scotland.

We can create a higher wage economy by increasing the minimum wage at least in line with inflation. We can bring everyone together – employers, unions and government – to build a fairer, more productive economy.

We know this approach works in other European countries of Scotland’s size. They have enjoyed higher growth rates and they have a smaller gap between rich and poor.

Other people and parties in an independent Scotland will have different ideas. But, however much we disagree on the right economic policies, only with independence will we in Scotland have the power to make these choices for our country. Without independence these decisions will continue to be taken at Westminster and will continue to be focussed on other parts of the UK.
Gains from independence whichever party is elected

- Decisions about Scotland will be taken by the people who care most about Scotland – those who live and work here

- A Parliament elected by people in Scotland will replace one where representatives from Scotland make up 9 per cent of the 650 members of the House of Commons; the House of Lords is wholly unelected

- Governments will always be formed by parties that win elections in Scotland. Key decisions for Scotland will not be made by governments without the support of the Scottish electorate

- A guarantee that tax and social security rates will be set by the Scottish Parliament, elected by the people of Scotland. Policies like the “bedroom tax” will no longer be imposed on Scotland

- Public services can be kept in public hands. The Scottish Parliament has kept the NHS public but could not stop Westminster privatising the Royal Mail

- An economic policy approach to promote economic stability and job security in Scotland will replace a framework which disproportionately benefits London and the South East of England

- Access to our own resources – for every one of the last 32 years estimates show Scotland has generated more tax per head than the UK as a whole. With independence, decisions about public spending will be taken here in Scotland

- Economic policy tailored to Scotland, for example our world-class universities and key growth industries like food and drink, life sciences, and tourism

- An independent Scotland can invest our oil wealth for future generations. Norway now has a savings fund worth more than £470 billion

- Our taxes will not be used to pay for nuclear weapons and we can remove Trident from Scotland for good
Gains from independence – if the current government is the first
government after independence

- Childcare extended to give our children the best start in life, make it easier for parents – especially mothers – to return to work and deliver new job opportunities

- Abolition of the “bedroom tax” to save 82,500 households in Scotland – including 63,500 households with a disabled adult and 15,500 households with children – an average of £50 per month

- Stopping the rollout of Universal Credit and Personal Independence Payments in Scotland

- The first steps towards a fairer tax system: basic rate tax allowances and tax credits rise at least in line with inflation; ending of the married couples tax allowance and abolishing the Shares for Rights scheme

- Pensioners’ incomes protected with the triple lock so that pensions increase every year by either inflation, earnings, or 2.5 per cent, whichever is highest

- Simplification of the tax system to costs and tax avoidance, with a target of £250 million extra revenue a year by the end of the first term of an independent Scottish Parliament

- Return of the Royal Mail to public ownership in Scotland, guaranteeing the quality of service that all parts of our country currently enjoy

- A Fair Work Commission and a guarantee that the minimum wage will rise at least in line with inflation. Over the last five years, this would have improved the earnings of the lowest paid people in Scotland by the equivalent of £675. Continued support for the living wage

- A timetable, produced within the first term, for reducing the rate of corporation tax by up to three percentage points to counter the business pull of London

- Examining further help for small businesses, for example the potential to increase the employment allowance, which would cut national insurance costs and encourage more jobs

- Reduction in Air Passenger Duty by 50 per cent, with a view to abolishing it when public finances allow

- Support for energy efficiency and the roll out of green technology to reduce energy bills by around 5 per cent
THE DEMOCRATIC DEFICIT

89% of Scottish MPs said NO to cutting child benefit in 2012.

91% of Scottish MPs said NO to bedroom tax in 2013.

80% of Scottish MPs said NO to privatisation of the Royal Mail in 2010.

81% of Scottish MPs said NO to public sector pension changes in 2013.

For 34 of the last 68 years, Scotland has been ruled by governments that were rejected at the ballot box in Scotland.

Source: House of Commons Library

Source: www.publicwhip.org.uk
You will have questions about each of the two futures that Scotland faces in the referendum.

On 26 November 2013 we published *Scotland’s Future – your guide to an independent Scotland*. *Scotland’s Future* sets out the case for independence, the gains of independence for you, your family, country, and how Scotland will become independent.

*Scotland’s Future* also contains detailed answers to 650 questions that have been asked of us about independence. *Scotland’s Future* is available from our website www.scotreferendum.com, where you can search the 650 questions, ask your own and order a free copy of the full document.

There are also questions for the Westminster Government about the alternative future for Scotland, if we vote No in the referendum. These include:

- What new powers is the Scottish Parliament guaranteed to get if we vote No?
- How does the Westminster Government plan to counter the concentration of wealth in London and the south east of England?
- How does the Westminster Government plan to address inequality in the UK?
- What guarantees are there for Scotland’s funding?
- What further cuts are planned by the Westminster Government and how will these affect Scottish families?
- How much will Scottish taxpayers be expected to contribute to the replacement of Trident?
- What guarantee is there that Scotland will remain in the EU in ten years time?

In considering your choice between Scotland’s two futures, you will want to think about the answers we give about independence, but also what happens if we vote No.

During the course of the referendum campaign you will hear lots of claims about the uncertainties of independence. In *Scotland’s Future* we have set out common-sense positions on issues such as our continued EU membership and arrangements for sharing the pound. These proposals are in the interests of Scotland, the rest of the UK and our other partners and friends. Remember that everyone has agreed to respect the result of the referendum and work together constructively to ensure that Scotland and the rest of the UK start as two successful, well run countries if we vote Yes.

Becoming independent is not unusual, and the experience of other countries is that the practical issues are resolved successfully. In 1945 there were 51 independent members of the United Nations. Now there are 193. If we vote Yes, Scotland can take its place amongst them on 24 March 2016.
Scotland’s Future is in your hands.

Scotland’s Future is a comprehensive guide to an independent Scotland and what it means for you.

Scotland’s Future answers your questions about independence and sets out the facts and figures on:

• How Scotland can afford to become independent.
• Scotland’s economic strengths and how we can make the most of our potential.
• How independence will help ensure that everyone in Scotland gets a fair deal.
• The ways in which independence will strengthen Scotland’s democracy.
• An independent Scotland’s place in the world.
• Other issues important to you

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