

Debate on Draft National Outcomes – SCVO Briefing

SCVO briefing to Scottish Parliament

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Our position

We strongly welcome all the revised National Outcomes. And the Sustainable Development Goals being used to frame them.

On the other hand, there is a disconnect between the overall Purpose statement and the National Outcomes. Rather than focusing on economic growth as the ultimate objective, human rights and responsibility to the planet should be the basis for the purpose here. Economic development is just one of the means by which we can achieve this.

Noting the difficulty of measuring progress against the outcomes, we call for a National Implementation Plan to make the National Indicators meaningful and engaging for people in Scotland. And the Scottish Government should continue to engage with civil society, the Open Government and Sustainable Development Goals networks in developing this Plan.

Our response

The Sustainable Development Goals context

We welcome the focus on SDGs in the revised National Performance Framework, and we believe that it can be a key pillar of domestic implementation of the Goals in Scotland and the 'whole-of-society' approach that is required to implementing them.

The SDGs are the closest the world has come to a strategy to eradicate poverty, address climate change and build peaceful, inclusive societies by 2030. This is an almighty challenge, but driving implementation of the SDGs can help us become the society

Scotland wants to be. The First Minister's commitment to this agenda was clear when Scotland signed up to the SDGs in 2015.

We are hopeful that the revised National Outcomes will mainstream the SDGs across all policy areas in Government and provide clarity over the responsibility of Ministers for the delivery of the SDGs. This is particularly important in relation to Brexit. We see the alignment of the National Outcomes with the SDGs as the starting point for developing and delivering an SDG National Implementation Plan for Scotland, as we have seen in Finland and that is currently being developed in Ireland.

A note on the Purpose

We welcome the inclusion of wellbeing in the Purpose for the first time, however, we feel that the revised purpose that sits above the new National Outcomes misses the point. The Purpose should drive our National Outcomes, but the focus on economic growth appears to have been bolted on and comes across as disconnected to the ambitions captured by the national outcomes themselves which seek to reduce poverty and inequality in Scotland whilst restoring and protecting our environment nationally and globally.

If 'sustainable inclusive economic growth' is the ultimate purpose, then all government agencies will take this to mean economic growth, and about focusing on specific 'growth industries'. The reality is more complex if we want people, their communities and the economy to interact in a way that leaves no-one behind.

We believe the purpose would be more meaningful and coherent with the national outcomes if it focuses on Scotland's role in securing human rights and a sustainable planet.

A note on the measures

It is also unclear how the relevant data to measure progress across the draft national indicators will be captured, and whether this data will provide the Scottish Government with the information it needs to successfully report on all 230 indicators and 169 targets that sit alongside the 17 SDGs. Without relevant data to underpin the measures, the outcomes could easily be construed as 'pie in the sky'.

Achieving the SDGs in Scotland requires a holistic approach that takes into account the interlinkages across sustainable development. Whilst we recognise the need for lead Cabinet Secretaries for each National Outcome, the revised framework does not give any indication of the interconnections between the 11 Outcomes and does not highlight the other members of the Scottish Cabinet and parts of the Scottish Government that are central to achieving a given Outcome. Whilst the redesign of the National Performance Framework is welcome and a great improvement, more could be done to take on a holistic systems-based approach as displayed by the SDGs.

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We call for a National Implementation Plan that outlines how the revised National Performance Framework will support reporting on each of the indicators and targets associated with the SDGs to the UN High- Level Political Forum. This should be co-created with Scotland's people and civil society.

Good engagement

We welcome the work by Carnegie UK Trust and Oxfam Scotland to support the Scottish Government in its effort to achieve wider public engagement and involvement in developing the revised National Outcomes. We also welcome Scottish Government's engagement with Scotland's Open Government and Sustainable Development Goal Networks to ensure a strong, open, and SDG-aware approach to the Outcomes.

But we would like to see more on how the Scottish Government will deepen public understanding, engagement and participation over the life-cycle of the refreshed NPF, which is essential in delivering the SDGs and the behavioural change that is required across our society. The SDGs feature significantly in classrooms across Scotland, and raising the profile of the NPF as the means for achieving the SDGs is vital in supporting domestic implementation of the Goals and better public engagement with this.

SCVO is already supporting engagement through the Scottish hubsite for SDGs, www.globalgoals.scot.

We therefore call for continued engagement with civil society, the Open Government and Sustainable Development Goals Network to openly co-design engagement.

About us

The Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) is the national body representing the third sector. There are over 45,000 voluntary organisations in Scotland involving around 138,000 paid staff and approximately 1.3 million volunteers. The sector manages an income of £5.3 billion.

SCVO works in partnership with the third sector in Scotland to advance our shared values and interests. We have over 1,900 members who range from individuals and grassroots groups, to Scotland-wide organisations and intermediary bodies.

As the only inclusive representative umbrella organisation for the sector SCVO:

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- has the largest Scotland-wide membership from the sector – our 1,900 members include charities, community groups, social enterprises and voluntary organisations of all shapes and sizes
 - our governance and membership structures are democratic and accountable - with an elected board and policy committee from the sector, we are managed by the sector, for the sector
 - brings together organisations and networks connecting across the whole of Scotland
 - SCVO works to support people to take voluntary action to help themselves and others, and to bring about social change.
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- Further details about SCVO can be found at www.scvo.org.uk.

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