

# Review of Scotland's National Outcomes

This response is submitted on behalf of Learning for Sustainability (Lfs) Scotland; Scotland's United Nations University-recognised Regional Centre of Expertise (RCE) on Education for Sustainable Development.

Lfs Scotland is an open membership network of more than 1,000 organisations and individuals working to harness the full potential of learning to create a flourishing, sustainable world. Members and partners come together to undertake collaborative projects, and research and advocacy that advance and embed Learning for Sustainability practice and policy in Scotland.

(<http://learningforsustainabilityscotland.org>).

At the launch of the current National Performance Framework in 2018, we commended Scotland's commitment to [putting humanity, wellbeing and sustainability at the heart of national policy-making](#). Our response to this 2023 review restates our view that the National Outcomes represent an "optimistic and inherently positive approach" blending Scotland's vision with the UN Sustainable Development Goals 2015-2030.

Perspectives were collated and synthesised at an online workshop (23 May 2023) with 70 registered participants. They represent views from stakeholders interested in learning for sustainability and its active implementation. Our response is informed by comments (mostly taken verbatim, here identified in italics) written on Jamboards.

## 1. Are there any changes to the current set of 11 National Outcomes that you would propose? If so, in summary, what would these be?

<p><b>Involvement of children and young people</b></p>	<p>Today's children and young people will experience the impact of present and future National Outcomes, and they are increasingly vocal and active in Scotland and globally. This review must enable, listen to, hear and respond to 'Children and Young People's Voice'.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Involvement of young people in initial NPF creation - ensure we have this in the new iteration</i></li> <li>• <i>Voice of young people is currently less represented</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>Values</b></p>	<p>Workshop participants celebrated expression of the underpinning values and principles we share as a nation in the National Outcomes: such as kindness, dignity, compassion and respect for the rule of law. As stated, 'The values inform the behaviours people in Scotland should see in everyday life, and what is prioritised'. As such, we suggest the addition of the value; 'respect/care for the natural world'.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Important that values are front and centre - chime with organisational values and best practice</i></li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Fantastic to see aspirational words like 'compassion' and 'love' - something to celebrate</i></li> <li>• <i>Social values are integrated - but not environmental ones!</i></li> <li>• <i>Like the outcomes about diversity and plurality</i></li> </ul>
<b>Aim of the Framework</b>	<p>Since the 2018 National Performance Framework was published, the twin climate and nature emergencies have become more apparent, and this should be reflected in the overall aims of the Framework.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The overall aims of the framework should include maintaining and improving the natural environment and its biodiversity</i></li> <li>• <i>Addressing the twin climate and nature emergencies should be included in the aims of the Framework</i></li> </ul>

### Suggested Changes to the current set of National Outcomes (in red)

As stated in the consultation document, there has been considerable change since 2018 and we suggest reflecting new priorities in the revised National Outcome statements.

- *Language could be seen as 'dated' - needs a refresh to ensure alignment with current policy landscape.*
- *Language - emphasis on global facing perspectives. Needs equal focus on LOCAL.*

Suggested changes are highlighted in red.

Outcome	Suggested changes
('Children and young people')	<p><b>.. grow up loved, safe and respected so that they realise their rights and full potential</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Focus more strongly on children - but young people have really been hit by economic changes. Refer to children and young people instead</i></li> <li>• <i>National outcomes for education seem very youth-focused - can there be a stronger emphasis on community/lifelong learning?</i></li> <li>• <i>include Rights of the Child more and also rights and disability access - be more explicit about engagement with these groups</i></li> <li>• <i>National outcomes on education and children - inclusive spaces play a role in physical wellbeing but also mental wellbeing and learning</i></li> <li>• <i>Is there enough about meaningful participation e.g. climate assemblies, young people?</i></li> </ul>
('Communities')	<p><b>... live in communities that are inclusive, connected, empowered, resilient, sustainable and safe</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Focus on the connection in communities rather than loneliness, like 'happiness index' &amp; 'wellbeing' to focus on positive connotations</i></li> <li>• <i>It's important that communities are 'sustainable' themselves - especially when many rural communities are struggling</i></li> </ul>

<p><b>('Culture')</b></p>	<p><b>... are creative and their vibrant and diverse cultures are expressed and enjoyed widely</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>'Culture' in the sense and meaning within new Lfs Action Plan is not really represented here - in terms of growing sustainability values</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>('Wellbeing Economy')</b></p>	<p><b>... have a globally competitive, entrepreneurial, inclusive and resilient sustainable economy that prioritises circular economy principles</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>No mention of Scottish 10 year social enterprise plan or the SE academy initiative or the circular economy. Needs to be integrated in the economy or fair work &amp; business sections</i></li> <li><i>include responsible consumption - SDG12 almost absent - address de-growth possibilities</i></li> <li><i>Include the proposed Wellbeing and Sustainable Development (Scotland) Bill</i></li> <li><i>given the climate mitigations and adaptations - should be aiming for creating a 'resilient' economy</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>('Education')</b></p>	<p><b>... are well-educated, skilled and able to contribute to a sustainable environment, economy and society throughout their lives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Would like to see it link more to existing educational agendas and requirements</i></li> <li><i>Not linking to National Improvement Framework, educational outcomes we already have!</i></li> <li><i>Where are meta-skills and competencies in the national outcomes? Increased focus on this now needs to be reflected here.</i></li> <li><i>Stronger link overall to UN SDGs and UNESCO competences to education at all levels.</i></li> <li><i>Terminology - comes across like a 'sausage factory' of attainment and progress and less about fulfilling the individual and the wider learning picture</i></li> <li><i>Stronger link between education and environment required</i></li> <li><i>Include outdoor learning, learning in, with and for nature, understanding nature and culture, appreciation of environmental limits and systems</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>('Environment')</b></p>	<p><b>... value, enjoy, protect, restore and enhance their environment and the biodiversity within it</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>More explicit links being made to natural environment e.g. outcomes around nature connectedness, climate, biodiversity</i></li> <li><i>Have reference to biodiversity and therefore the links to the biodiversity strategy</i></li> <li><i>Gap around flooding - going to become more of an issue going forward. More links to adaptation needed on NPF. 'Climate change' language means people miss the issue, also use 'flooding' and 'extreme weather events' to identify specific issues</i></li> <li><i>Forestry: how clear cutting = flooding. Requires a renewed planning for effective forest regeneration, and cutting practices.</i></li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>As well as flooding the major impacts of the twin climate and nature emergencies on agriculture and fisheries, increased fires, sea-level rise (albeit less rapid than flooding), and biodiversity loss (much less visible) - terrestrial and marine should be mentioned</i></li> <li>• <i>Helping people to engage with and benefit from the natural environment as part of their day-to-day lives is fundamental to conserving the environment for now and for future generations</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>('Business and Fair Work')</b></p>	<p><b>... have thriving and innovative businesses and social enterprises, with quality jobs and fair work for everyone</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Alternative industries (social enterprise, moving away from oil and gas, forestry regeneration) have not got enough focus</i></li> <li>• <i>Community Wealth Building is missing</i></li> <li>• <i>Social justice - needs to focus on things like 'just transition' and social issues as well as biodiversity loss and the climate crisis</i></li> <li>• <i>It doesn't mention how sustainability fits into businesses– corporate social responsibility and environmental sustainability</i></li> <li>• <i>Business option is very idealistic - what does 'quality job' mean? Some people are happy to just have a job and then go home. Not everybody is ambitious!</i></li> <li>• <i>Respect different forms of work and contributions</i></li> <li>• <i>Include entrepreneurship and social enterprise aspects. Many people do not have aspirational careers. Need to state that we develop business skills</i></li> <li>• <i>The growth of the economy is limited by the environment - all goals in the NPF are limited by planetary boundaries</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>('Health and Wellbeing')</b></p>	<p><b>... are emotionally, physically and mentally healthy and active</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Wellbeing initiatives missing</i></li> <li>• <i>Needs to be more precise - e.g. 'mental health' is very broad!</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>('Human Rights')</b></p>	<p><b>... respect, protect and fulfil human rights and live free from discrimination</b></p>
<p><b>('International')</b></p>	<p><b>... are open, connected and make a positive contribution to an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable world</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Need to engage with international people overseas as well as to talking about them being here as visitors - aid, cultural exchange etc.</i></li> <li>• <i>Need to ensure our international ambitions are still strongly articulated despite current political constraints</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>('Poverty')</b></p>	<p><b>tackle poverty by sharing opportunities, wealth, power and dignity more equally</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Just transition in an unpredictable and uncertain world is important here - so that no-one is left behind in social, economic and environmental crises.</i></li> <li>• <i>Could use some of the language of 'dignity' of the SDGs</i></li> </ul>

## 2. Are there any changes you would propose to the wider National Performance Framework or set of National Indicators?

The National Outcomes, based on the SDGs, potentially represent an important framework to drive action related to the SDGs in Scotland. More consideration could be given to how to highlight interconnections across the SDGs and the NPF. In our view, the role played by the National Outcomes, National Performance Framework and National Indicators in the development of Scottish Government policy and spending is not sufficiently clear. We propose the development of a National Outcomes Implementation Plan linked to spending decisions, with clearly- specified targets and regular reporting on progress.

- *Want more joined up thinking with an integrated implementation plan*
- *How will the NPF help us to make sense of /link to and / or filter the raft of new education and skills reform polices- and other policy areas e.g. climate change, CESAP, NSET, etc. It's a minefield and if those working in these sectors find it hard to keep up and make sense of the links - can the NPF help to filter this and should policies demonstrate how they link to NPF with SDGs embedded within it?*

## 3. What impact does the current National Outcomes have on your work?

As part of a global community of more than 180 UN University-recognised Regional Centres of Expertise (RCE) on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) addressing the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the SDG framework is used to enhance our work and we work in partnership with others to contextualise the SDGs in Scotland. The top-level alignment of the 2018 National Outcomes to the SDGs is both welcomed, and promoted, by LfS Scotland.

In principle, all 11 Outcomes connect to all 17 SDGs and therefore members potentially have an interest in and actively contribute towards all of the National Outcomes, although individual members may have greater interest in particular SDGs.

Workshop participants were drawn from members in school, college, university, local and national government, youth, community, NGO and business contexts. Many were unaware of and do not use the National Outcomes and National Performance Framework. The top-level alignment between SDGs and the National Outcomes has not been developed down to target or indicator level and, in practice, the connection between the two frameworks is unclear.

- *The statements are great - but they are disconnected from practice (intent vs practice)*
- *Make people aware of the national outcomes and NPF! Not everyone knows about them*
- *Need to promote the NPF more widely - are people aware of it???*
- *It's also enabling people to understand what it means and how to relate to it.*
- *Promote to Local Authorities, agencies, private sector, civil society including communities and general public.*
- *Issue of charitable organisations and funding - objectives from funders needs to match indicators*
- *What is the awareness within communities of the SDGs?*
- *Raise awareness within communities of the SDGs – compared to other European countries, Scotland has limited awareness. Articulate how NPF allows national implementation and monitoring of the SDGs.*

### 4. What are the main obstacles and barriers in the further implementation of the National Outcomes?

<p><b>Lack of awareness</b></p>	<p>The stated aspiration is for everyone, 'government, charities, communities, businesses and people – working together to make these National Outcomes a reality' but more resource needs to be directed at awareness raising and engagement in every sector.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Make people aware of the national outcomes! not everyone knows about them</i></li> <li>• <i>Need to promote the NPF more widely - are people aware of it?</i></li> <li>• <i>What is the awareness within communities of the SDGs?</i></li> <li>• <i>Issue of charitable organisations and funding - objectives from funders needs to match indicators</i></li> <li>• <i>Some sectors are very focused on SDGs whereas others aren't</i></li> <li>• <i>The statements are great - but they are disconnected from practice (intent vs practice)</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>Data Gathering</b></p>	<p>In addition to awareness raising, for the National Performance Framework to be truly "for all of Scotland", there needs to be a sense of ownership across a variety of sectors. More collaborative, multi-sectoral partnerships are needed to support further implementation. These will require transparent and open processes for reporting on and reviewing the National Outcomes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Different terminology makes it challenging to measure - are we all comparing the same thing?</i></li> <li>• <i>Does it make sense to other people who are using this? - e.g. 'well-educated' means something different to different people at different times depending on their needs. Potentially this terminology can exclude people</i></li> <li>• <i>Not always clear what ACTION is required to achieve a specific indicator</i></li> <li>• <i>How do we join up? To achieve different indicators</i></li> </ul>