

# SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT DRAFT NATIONAL PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

## RESPONSE FROM LEARNING FOR SUSTAINABILITY SCOTLAND

8<sup>th</sup> April 2026



## About Learning for Sustainability Scotland

This response is submitted on behalf of [Learning for Sustainability Scotland](#) ('Lfs Scotland'); Scotland's United Nations University-recognised Regional Centre of Expertise (RCE) on Education for Sustainable Development, and part of a global family of 200 RCEs.

Lfs Scotland is an open membership network of more than 1,100 organisations and individuals working to harness the full potential of learning across all sectors to create a flourishing, sustainable and just world. Members and partners come together to undertake collaborative projects, research, and advocacy to advance and embed Learning for Sustainability practice and policy in Scotland and beyond.

### Context

At the launch of the 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 the 2023 review](#) restated 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.

This response to the Scottish Government's proposed refreshed model and refocused vision for the future of the National Performance Framework is informed by a hybrid event held on 30 March 2026 and co-organised by Lfs Scotland in partnership with Scotland's International Development Alliance, the University of Strathclyde and SDG Network Scotland.

### 1. CONCEPT

- **Vision:** We do not consider this proposed National Performance Framework (NPF) to be 'a compelling and aspirational vision of sustainable and long-term wellbeing for the people of Scotland' as stated on page 2.
  - The presented vision for the future is uninspiring and lacking in ambition, entirely people-centric and does not recognise our interdependence with the natural world. An inspiring, ambitious, overarching vision should highlight an outward-looking Scotland, where we respect and restore nature; societies are thriving, inclusive and equitable; and a vibrant economy delivers prosperity and shared opportunities.
  - Without a clear definition of 'wellbeing' this term risks being perceived as solely focused on health-related issues. The language used, such as the vision to 'improve' the wellbeing of Scotland's people, implies a starting point that is deficit-oriented rather than presenting an inspirational vision of the kind of country we aspire for Scotland to be.

- **UN Sustainable Development Goals:** The document (page 2) states that the Framework ‘encompasses our social, economic and environmental needs’, however its mapping to the UN Sustainable Development Goals is very loosely categorised and needs to be more clearly and closely defined. There is evidence that some of the UN SDGs are not covered by the NPF.
- **Decision Making:**
  - It is not clear in this current proposal how the overarching conceptual Framework maps across existing legislative and compliance duties for public bodies (e.g. the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Scotland), Equality Act 2010, the Environment Act 2026) in order to ensure policy coherence.
  - To assist with decision making, this Framework should itself be anchored in legislation to ensure that it is used by public bodies for accountability and delivery. It is unclear from a public body perspective what is being/would be asked of them as part of a wider system.
- **Naming the Framework** - If the aspiration is to make this Framework more accessible and inclusive to a wide range of audiences, its ongoing development should involve all stakeholders including young voices in the co-design, production and measurement of progress. This will ensure that the thinking and planning to improve people’s lives in a systemic way in the long term is democratic, accountable, and will address ownership issues from the outset, thus fostering a sense of shared responsibility and stakeholder engagement.

## 2. OUTCOMES

- **Higher-level outcomes.**
  - The aspiration to have fewer Outcomes is welcome and easier from the user’s perspective. However fewer high-level Outcomes may obscure both compromises and complexity.
  - The cross-cutting perspectives need to be explicit for these Outcomes to achieve their full ambition.
  - The following are not made explicit in the new Framework and Outcomes:
    - **Rurality and regional diversity**
    - **Culture and heritage.**
    - **Technology and digital participation**
    - **Governance and democracy**

- All proposed outcome descriptors should be reviewed, for example:
    - Replace ‘Skills’ with ‘Learning and Education’, and expand the definition to embrace knowledge, skills, culture, ethics and values, and agency
  - For clearer links to the SDGs replace ‘Sustainable’ with ‘Sustainability’ and redefine sustainability as the overarching outcome/vision including environment interconnected with social and economic and linked to cross-cutting themes (including people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership).
  - ‘Connected’ should include more active language, for example ‘celebrating’ as well as ‘participating’.
  - Further clarity is required regarding the difference these higher-level outcomes will make compared to those in the current NPF. Co-creation and stakeholder engagement will be required to ensure shared ownership and responsibility.
- **Cross-cutting themes**
- **Examples**  
 Examples of cross cutting perspectives stated in this document are ‘fairness, equality and human rights’, and influencing and making an impact internationally, here stated more passively as ‘Scotland’s place in the world’. These are an expression of the underpinning values and principles we share as a nation and should also include values such as love, kindness, compassion, respect for the rule of law, and care for the natural world.  
 In line with previous Frameworks, we suggest these are placed at the heart of any final model and highlighted as critical to the way in which the ambitions of the Framework will be realised.

### 3. UNDERSTANDING OUR PROGRESS

- We recommend the development of a National Outcomes Implementation Plan linked to long-term budgeting decisions, with clearly- specified targets and regular reporting on progress.
- The previous NPF was not as widely known and recognised as it needed to be. More resource needs to be directed at awareness raising and engagement in every sector.
- In addition to awareness-raising, the co-creation and sustaining of more collaborative, multi- and pan-sectoral partnerships will support further progress; with transparent and open processes for reporting on and reviewing the Outcomes.
- ‘Measurement’ should be co-designed and co-delivered at all levels of the system from community to national level, recognising the need for flexibility in designing indicators that feed into the national picture to take account of the ‘many Scotlands’.
- Regular opportunities to take stock, communicate, celebrate achievements and identify gaps throughout the implementation and delivery of the Framework will be required. In this way the Framework will be regarded as a dynamic, evolving vision to forge a sustainable and just Scotland.

## 4. WAYS OF WORKING

- Clarity will be needed on the body or individual responsible for ensuring and overseeing the implementation, scrutiny, and ongoing measurement of all aspects of this Framework. Suggestions include; a Minister for Policy Coherence; learning from the example of the Futures Commissioner in Wales
- Clear guidance on implementation will be required for all who will be involved.
- Collaboration will be key, aligning data and strategies, especially on cross-cutting themes.
- The three proposed 'Ways of Working 1. Long-term and strategic, 2. Collaborative, 3. Inclusive' must embrace effective and joined-up policy-making.
- Ongoing community engagement and scrutiny by local as well as national organisations will be required if success is to be embedded and sustained.

## 5. RESOURCES AND GUIDANCE

- A National Conversation on the proposed Framework is required to ensure that it is fit for purpose, robust, and reflects the very different needs of the 'many Scotlands'. This will ensure visibility, ownership – and consequently, buy-in and achievement of its aims.
- Resources should be co-designed with and for the communities and people of Scotland. If Scotland is to realise the ambition of these Outcomes, then her people need to feel a sense of co-ownership and buy-in.
- Resources that are co-developed by communities across Scotland will help articulate how they can be involved in enabling this national vision and, more importantly, show how this national vision can be delivered at local level in a way that meets the very different needs of our 'many Scotlands' and how local interventions feed into a national Framework
- Consideration should be given in the overarching guidance, materials and resources to highlighting interconnections across the SDGs and the NPF. LfS Scotland welcomes the opportunity to collaborate with others to develop these.

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