

Equality, Opportunity, Community

Our Programme for Government














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It is the honour of my life to lead the country I love.

I made a promise to be a First Minister who leads Scotland in the interests of all our people. I am determined to make Scotland a country where people, businesses and communities realise their full potential through opportunities and choice, while handing the next generation a country of which we can be proud.

During these challenging times, the people of Scotland need a government that is on their side. One that understands that times are tough and takes action to improve people's lives. A government that takes the steps needed today to create a better future for all.

The Government I lead will be defined by these qualities and should be judged by the steps it takes to support a higher standard of living across the entire country, to improve the wellbeing of the people of Scotland, to grow our economy, and to support, protect and improve our public services.

Shortly after becoming First Minister, I set three missions for my government to deliver:

- **Equality: Tackling poverty and protecting people from harm.**
- **Opportunity: Building a fair, green and growing economy.**
- **Community: Delivering efficient and effective public services.**

These missions are the driving ambition of my government as we build a Scotland which can withstand the difficult times through which we are all living. Each mission is connected. When delivered together, they will make a real and positive difference to the lives of people across Scotland.

When we get these connections right we create opportunities, unleash potential and empower people, communities and businesses to thrive. This is why my first Programme for Government is unapologetically anti-poverty, pro-growth which is both fair and green, and focused on delivering high quality public services.

It is focused on reducing poverty and offering practical help and support, particularly to the most vulnerable in our communities. It seeks to attract investment, drive innovation and grow our wellbeing economy – playing to our strengths in areas such as data and technology, energy, financial services, food and drink, and tourism, while also seizing the new economic opportunities presented by the just transition. It puts responding to the climate crisis at the very heart of this government. It takes the critical next steps in reforming and modernising our public services, helping to tackle the aftermath of the pandemic and supporting the recovery of key public services, including our NHS and education sector.

I have been, and will continue to be, honest and open about the challenges we face. This is particularly important when it comes to how challenging the public finances are. I will continue to be frank about the need to make difficult decisions to ensure we free up resources to target support to those who are

in the greatest need. While progressive tax and spending decisions will of course play a part in our response to the financial challenges we face, we are also committed to growing the economy for a purpose – to help deliver these missions and change Scotland for the better.

Delivering today

Scotland is a country of many strengths, and significant steps have been taken in recent years that have made real improvements to the lives of people who live and work here. Over the last 16 years we have developed and deepened the social contract between Scotland's government and its people. Our economy performs better than most parts of the UK, wages are higher and poverty is lower, and our public services perform strongly. We have made great strides in reducing our emissions and are taking decisive steps to address the climate and nature emergencies.

From soaring energy costs and inflation, and the UK Government's austerity and mismanagement of the public finances, to the UK's hard Brexit, the pandemic, and the illegal Russian invasion of Ukraine, many factors outwith our control are making everyday life extremely difficult for far too many people. Just as these issues have put a strain on households and businesses, they have also put a strain on government and the services we provide.

While we have strong foundations to build on, and have done much to support people during the current cost of living crisis, we know that, for too many, life is hard right now. We are living through a period of change and the challenges we face are great. With change comes opportunity and, just as we have done so before, Scotland will rise to these challenges. Through this Programme for Government we will deliver on our missions and grasp these opportunities with both hands.

Equality: Tackling poverty and protecting people from harm

Poverty is one of the greatest barriers we face in delivering greater wellbeing through each of our missions, but it is only with independence that we will have the powers required to eradicate poverty in our society.

We will continue to use our fixed Budget to reduce poverty, improve opportunities and reduce health inequalities, protecting people as far as possible from the harm inflicted by the UK Government's austerity-driven policies and the ongoing cost of living crisis. Under my government there will be a relentless focus on reducing poverty and its causes, driven by flagship measures such as our unique Scottish Child Payment.

We are focusing our resources on tackling poverty where we can and building the foundations necessary for future generations to thrive. We will continue to tackle the cost of living crisis by prioritising an almost £3 billion spend on reducing poverty and protecting households in 2023-24.

This will mean continued investment in our game-changing Scottish Child Payment, worth £25 per child per week, and in continued provision of free bus travel for over two million people, including all young people under the age of 22. This will also mean the tripling of our Fuel Insecurity Fund to £30 million this year and offering free school meals to all pupils in primaries one to five and in special schools, saving families on average £400 per child per year.

In addition, this Programme for Government commits more support for social justice than ever before, with our spending on social security benefits forecast to increase by nearly £1 billion in 2024-25.

I want to continue the National Conversation about what the Scottish Government needs to do to tackle poverty – which began with my Anti-Poverty Summit in May. This includes further exploring how we can work with our partners to take effective action and how we can do that in a way that we can afford as a nation, supporting a strong and vibrant wellbeing economy.

I have committed to using my first Budget to expand access to high quality, funded childcare. Supporting families is not only fundamentally the right thing to do, it is critical to our missions. Affordable and accessible childcare supports employment and the economy, and secure and sustainable employment helps lift families out of poverty. Over the coming year, we will work with Local Government and other partners to develop the local infrastructure and services needed to provide childcare from nine months to the end of primary school in specific communities in six local authority areas.

We will empower parents, carers and children in those communities by designing and delivering childcare services around their needs, including testing how families can use their funded hours more flexibly, and widening access to a greater variety of provision, be it a childminder, a family centre, a nursery or an after school club.

We will also develop and test a new digital service that will help parents and carers choose and manage their childcare more effectively. In parallel, from next year, we will begin work to phase in an expanded national offer for families with two-year-olds, focused on those who will benefit most. This will build on the foundations of the existing 1140 programme, which already makes high quality early learning and childcare available to around a quarter of families with two-year olds on the lowest incomes.

Taken together, we will expand access to funded childcare for 13,000 more children and families by the end of this Parliament. These are the next key steps in our long term programme of expansion and improvement to the childcare system in Scotland.

We do not have all of the powers required to address the root causes of poverty. No one should have to choose whether to feed themselves or their children as we approach winter.

That is why my government is calling for the UK Government to legislate to put an Essentials Guarantee in place to adequately cover the cost of essentials, including food, transport energy, and to ensure that deductions, such as debt repayments to government, sanctions, or as a result of the benefit cap, can never pull support below this level.

Opportunity: Building a fair, green and growing economy

The Government I lead believes in sustainable economic growth for a purpose. We know that businesses, if supported, will help create good jobs, deliver fair wages, expand our tax base and help to provide important revenue for us to invest in tackling poverty, improving our public services and delivering Fair Work. That is the purpose at the very heart of our vision of a wellbeing economy.

When businesses succeed, Scotland succeeds. It is on the back of the success of businesses, large and small, that we will deliver a wellbeing economy where good, well-paying, sustainable jobs are created and innovation flourishes – enabling us to reduce poverty and widen the tax base that our public services rely on.

I promised the business community that my door would always be open and in my first 100 days the Scottish Government took important steps to reset this relationship, including agreeing the New Deal for Business – but this is only the start.

The business community now, rightly, expects us to deliver. That is why we are taking forward a new £15 million package of measures to unleash entrepreneurial talent from all walks of life and all parts of Scotland, helping start-ups to scale up, and putting our world-class universities at the heart of our economic future to drive innovation and create high-value jobs as a magnet for investment.

We continue to exhaust all efforts to attract global talent to come to Scotland to enhance and support our wellbeing economy, including pressing the UK Government to do more through their reserved immigration powers in areas such as piloting a rural worker visa. We will transform the support we offer small businesses and ensure their voice is heard as we develop and implement policies to transform our economy.

We are a government for the whole of Scotland, and while our missions are national in scope, they will be local in terms of delivery. We are delivering Green Freeports in Inverness and Cromarty and on the Forth, and investment zones in Glasgow and the North East. We are fully committed to dualling the A9 between Inverness and Perth and making improvements to the A96, including dualling Inverness to Nairn and the Nairn Bypass, and we will publish the review of the A96 Dualling Programme following the public engagement last year. We are progressing our Rural Delivery Plan, setting out how all parts of the Scottish Government are delivering for Scotland's rural, coastal and island communities – with a particular focus on transport, housing, social justice, repopulation, digital connectivity and economic development.

We are seeing the devastating impacts of climate change, particularly on the world's poorest, with increasing frequency. This is the existential threat of our times and we have a moral duty to respond to the climate and nature crises. The stakes could not be higher. We do not underestimate what this change

means for daily life, particularly during these tough times. However, this is the time for climate leadership, not for playing politics while the planet burns, and my government will continue to show the leadership required.

In the year ahead, we will set out how we propose to reduce Scotland's contribution to climate change by 2040 in our draft Climate Change Plan, ensuring this journey is fair and actively tackles inequalities through our just transition planning. We will also continue to support the countries hardest hit by the climate crisis – often those that have done little or nothing to cause it – through our Climate Justice Fund, including providing £24 million to support work in Rwanda, Malawi and Zambia.

We have the people and resources to adapt and thrive, seizing the economic opportunities this transformation presents. Through a new Green Industrial Strategy we will help businesses and investors, so that the people of Scotland can share in the enormous economic opportunities of the global transition to net zero. We recognise that public sector investment alone will not be enough to respond to the challenge we face in addressing the Climate Emergency. A key focus in the year ahead will be to work across the public and private sectors to drive forward agreed recommendations from the Investor Panel on how we attract private investment for large scale infrastructure projects and use public spending more effectively to crowd in private capital.

My government will use every lever at its disposal to deliver a wellbeing economy that is fair, green and growing.

Community: Delivering efficient and effective public services

We will work to improve living standards, to reduce poverty and to support high-quality public services. The NHS, social care, schools and childcare remain our focus and we will also keep The Promise to care experienced

children while continuing to support our police force and tackle crime, and deliver affordable housing and transport.

I have been clear that more needs to be done to support the social care sector, particularly when it comes to pay. We know that the recovery in health must move in parallel to improvements in the social care sector, where staff recruitment and retention have proved particularly challenging. There are over 200,000 workers in the social care sector and four out of five are women. Increasing pay not only helps social care staff, but will positively impact on our wider priorities on child poverty, Fair Work and post-Covid recovery in the health sector.

I pledged to make greater investment in the social care sector a top priority and to ensure the Scottish Government does what it can to tackle the ongoing recruitment and retention crisis. These jobs are as challenging as they are complex and it is right that the contribution of staff is properly recognised. This is why we are committing to provide the necessary funding in the next Budget to increase the pay of social care workers in the private, third and independent (PVI) sectors in a direct care role, and those working in the PVI sector to deliver funded early learning and childcare, to at least £12 per hour, an increase that could be worth up to £2,000 per year for those on full-time contracts.

The recovery and reform of our NHS and other vital public services remain critical to supporting our wellbeing economy and to improving the life chances of people across our country. Under my leadership we are reforming our justice system to place victims and witnesses at its heart, continuing to reduce the backlog of cases and waiting times and ensuring services effectively reduce reoffending. In education we will set out our plans to reform our education and skills bodies and put the voices of children, young people and adult learners at their core – all informed by expert and independent reviews.

We will work with senior leaders and role models to consider how we can best promote positive masculinity together, recognising that we all want to live in a fair and equal society. This work will highlight positive examples of behaviour, making a difference in the lives of everyone. It will help build better mental health and wellbeing for men and boys, encourage healthier, respectful relationships and reduce what is often known as ‘toxic masculinity’ which can impact negatively on relationships, workplaces, and society.

Team Scotland

We know these three missions can only be delivered through a “Team Scotland” approach, defined by consensus and collaboration. Yes, the challenges are significant, but so too are the talents and resources we have to meet them.

Partnership and collaboration will define my leadership and the Scottish Government will get on with the job of working with our partners in the business community, trade unions, Local Government, and the third sector.

We have proven that partnerships can work and I look forward to building on the strong foundations provided by the progressive policy programme set out in the Bute House Agreement and continuing the partnership with the Scottish Green Party.

In my first 100 days I introduced a new approach to how we will deliver as a government, agreeing a mandate letter between myself and each member of my Cabinet which sets out the outcomes they will achieve in the months ahead – the full suite of mandate letters are available on [gov.scot](https://www.gov.scot).

I am proud to have delivered the Verity House Agreement, resetting and redefining the relationship between the Scottish Government and Local Government, and ensuring that we are collectively focused on our shared priorities and our duties to deliver for people and communities.

Moving forward together

Scotland continues to face one of the most difficult public spending environments that this devolved Parliament has ever seen and we have been transparent about that in our Medium Term Financial Strategy. As a result, this Programme for Government is necessarily subject to the outcome of our Budget process which concludes towards the end of this financial year.

Scotland does not yet have all the powers required to fully transform our economy and society for the better, but within the limited powers and budget available, I will continue to do everything possible to build a fair, green and growing wellbeing economy, to tackle poverty and inequality in our society, and to deliver efficient and effective public services.

It is because we lack these vital powers that I have continued to develop the case for independence since taking office. It is vital that the people of Scotland have the information they need to make an informed choice about Scotland's future. We have published detailed papers on a range of critical issues for an independent Scotland, including the economy, constitution, and citizenship – with more to follow in the coming months.

While we make this case, we will continue to vigorously oppose steps by the UK Government to undermine or weaken the powers of Scotland's Parliament. But to truly transform our economy, society, and public services, and to reap the benefits of Scotland's resources for current and future generations, we need the powers of independence and to retake our place in the European Union.

This is a Programme for Government focused on what really matters to the people of Scotland – reducing poverty, delivering growth, helping to tackle climate change, and providing high quality public services.

I promised new leadership and a fresh start. I promised to collaborate and to work constructively with our partners in Local Government, business and the third sector. I promise to deliver for the people of Scotland.



First Minister

Humza Yousaf MSP

Delivering our National Missions

Equality: Tackling poverty and protecting people from harm

Poverty harms too many people and communities and tackling it in all its forms, particularly child poverty, underpins how we will govern. We have been clear that nothing is off the table, no matter how hard that choice is, and that we will continue to use every power we have to protect people across Scotland from the cost of living crisis and the harm inflicted by UK Government policies. As a government, we have spent over a billion pounds mitigating the impacts of 13 years of UK Government policy such as the bedroom tax and benefit cap.

This government will invest £5.3 billion in 2023-24 through devolved benefits. Over the last five years we have also invested £711 million through activities such as Discretionary Housing Payments and the Scottish Welfare Fund to mitigate the austerity of UK Government policies. This money could be spent on core services like health, education and transport.

In the year ahead, the Scottish Government will take forward a comprehensive work programme with our partners in Local Government and the third sector to tackle poverty, address barriers to equality and protect all people from harm. Poverty does not affect everyone equally and that is why we will have a particular focus on supporting women, disabled people, ethnic minorities and children from our six priority family groups – underpinned by our unwavering commitment to keeping The Promise.



- In the year ahead, we commit to work with Local Government and other partners to develop the local infrastructure and services needed to provide childcare from nine months to the end of primary school in specific communities in six local authority areas. Testing different models of delivery that meet local needs, including digital services, is critical and that is why we will focus on prototyping digital services that will help parents and carers choose and manage their childcare more effectively.
- Since its introduction in February 2021, our unique, game-changing Scottish Child Payment has provided over £352 million, and as of 30 June over 316,000 children were actively benefiting from this payment – lifting an estimated 50,000 children out of relative poverty in Scotland this year. Despite the challenging economic environment, we commit to continued investment in our Scottish Child Payment, currently worth £25 per child per week.
- Our Housing Bill will help to deliver our New Deal for Tenants by creating new tenants' rights and powers for the introduction of a system of long term rent controls. To support that, we will continue working with stakeholders across landlord, tenant and investor groups. The Bill will also introduce new duties aimed at the prevention of homelessness.
- The introduction of a pilot for the removal of ScotRail peak-time fares, beginning in October, is a key step in delivering on our missions and it is a move that will make rail travel more affordable and accessible during the pilot, while helping identify longer-term steps to reduce car use.
- Delivering Fair Work for all is critical to our missions and a top priority for the Scottish Government. We are committed to boosting wages by increasing the number of employers who pay at least the Real Living Wage and to promoting Fair Work as set out in our Fair Work Action Plan.

Opportunity: Building a fair, green and growing economy

We have been clear that our ambition to make Scotland fairer goes hand in hand with making Scotland more prosperous. We are committed to resetting our relationship with the business community and we will use every power at our disposal to support sustainable economic growth and maximise the opportunities of the green economy – helping businesses to thrive and people to realise their full potential.

A just transition to net zero is at the heart of our approach. Scotland is at the forefront of the clean energy transition and our green jobs revolution is well underway. We are backing this up with almost £5 billion of investment in the net zero energy economy in Scotland over this parliamentary term, including our ten-year commitment to the £500 million Just Transition Fund for Aberdeen, the North East and Moray. It is through this just transition that we will also continue to show genuine climate leadership. The transition to net zero will indeed be challenging, but this is also a once in a century opportunity to transform our economy, our communities and our lives for the better.

- In the year ahead, we will implement the recommendations of the New Deal for Business Group, putting this at the heart of our economic strategy. We will work with business to identify and remove regulations that are no longer required, if a good case can be made. We will ensure that businesses, including small businesses, are engaged from the earliest stage of policy development. We will establish a new Small Business Unit to ensure that the interests of small businesses are always considered. We will work with partners to transform the way we provide support to small businesses and to help small businesses raise productivity and reduce costs.

- We will implement a new enterprise package. Our aim is to unleash innovation and entrepreneurial talent from all walks of life and in all parts of Scotland. We will make it easier to start and scale a business. We will put Scotland's universities at the heart of our economic future through spin-outs and the commercialisation of research. We will deliver our innovation strategy and support business growth in a range of high-value clusters, such as energy transition, health and life sciences, advanced manufacturing, and data and digital.
- Responding to the climate crisis is a fundamental priority for this government. Scaling up renewables is central to our strategy and that is why we will establish a sector deal with the onshore wind industry to help deliver our onshore wind ambition, maximising the benefits for Scotland's economy and communities. We will also develop a Green Industrial Strategy, setting out how the Scottish Government intends to help businesses and investors realise the enormous economic opportunities of the global transition to net zero and of creating good, well-paid jobs in sectors such as offshore wind and hydrogen, while also supporting the development of sectoral Just Transition Plans.
- Through our draft Climate Change Plan, the Scottish Government will set out how we continue to drive down emissions with bold action across transport, heat, and other areas – demonstrating how our ambition will be realised while maximising opportunities for the economy, job creation, health and the natural environment.
- We are committed to education and skills reform and driving forward our ambitions around excellence and equity for all children, young people and lifelong learners in Scotland. With their voices at the core, these reforms will draw on the evidence from three recent independent reviews – the National Discussion on Education, the Review of Qualifications and Assessment and the Review of the Skills Delivery Landscape. To support our reform agenda, we will also bring forward legislation to ensure that we have the right structures and organisations in place to deliver our ambitions to make Scotland the best place in the world to be educated.

Community: Delivering efficient and effective public services

We are undertaking ambitious reform of public services, rebuilding and reshaping how education is delivered and putting victims and witnesses at the heart of our justice system – all underpinned by an ambitious and comprehensive legislative package. We have launched a new ten-year cancer strategy to help improve survival rates and provide quality care. We have also published strategies to improve the treatment and care of those with dementia and those who have suffered a stroke. We are making progress in tackling long waits for NHS treatment.

We believe in supporting people and communities by understanding their needs and their strengths, so we will enable our public servants to co-design systems focused on early support and intervention where and when people need it. We must continue to improve the way we deliver public services, driving efficiencies and use of digital and technology while encouraging people to live active and healthy lives. This is fundamental to improving outcomes across our society, protecting people from harm and reducing inequalities, including for all women and girls. Building on the Verity House Agreement, we continue to work in partnership with Local Government to develop services focused on the prevention of social harms, delivery of vital local services and building thriving communities.

- The Verity House Agreement sets out how the local and national governments of Scotland will work together and progress our shared priorities: tackling poverty, just transition to net zero and sustainable public services. In the year ahead, we will work with our local authority partners to deepen and embed this partnership, with a particular focus on agreeing a revised Fiscal Framework.
- Greater investment in the social care sector is a top priority for the Scottish Government. It is essential to make sure people get the vital care and support they need by tackling the sector's ongoing recruitment and retention crisis. This will also support the recovery of our NHS while helping to ensure people can be supported at home. We commit to provide the necessary funding in the next Budget to increase the pay of social care workers in the private, third and independent (PVI) sectors in a direct care role, and those working in the PVI sector to deliver funded early learning and childcare, to at least £12 per hour. We remain committed to the National Care Service and in the year ahead we will deliver legislation, subject to the agreement of Parliament, to ensure consistency of provision and improvements in social care, social work, and community health support, working in partnership with people who access and deliver services, trade unions, Local Government, and the third sector.
- Addressing hospital waiting lists is critical and through our targeted investment, such as our £1 billion NHS Recovery Plan, we are making significant progress. We will continue to work with Health Boards to reduce waiting lists and protect planned care. We must match demand with capacity and that is why, by the end of 2023, we will open the National Treatment Centre (NTC) in Forth Valley and deliver the second phase of the NHS Golden Jubilee NTC, providing significant additional capacity in endoscopies, as well as orthopaedics and general surgery.
- We have seen good progress in closing the poverty-related attainment gap since the pandemic, particularly in primary school attainment. In the year ahead, we will continue to support schools and local authorities to improve the attainment of children and young people impacted by poverty, with a particular focus on literacy and numeracy – underpinned by our £1 billion investment in the Scottish Attainment Challenge.
- We are committed to supporting justice agencies to reduce court backlogs, including aiming to end the backlog of summary cases during 2024 and reduce waiting times for justice. Reform of the justice system is fundamental and that is why, in the year ahead, we will take forward a comprehensive package of legislation – including progress of the Victims, Witnesses, and Justice Reform (Scotland) Bill and the Police (Ethics, Conduct and Scrutiny) (Scotland) Bill and implementation of the Bail and Release from Custody (Scotland) Act 2023. We will also continue to support Police Scotland to ensure they have the tools they need to keep the public safe, supporting the roll out of body worn cameras to officers over the next two years.



Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Finance

Shona Robison MSP

Delivering sound public finances, producing a balanced budget and leading cross-government delivery, including to reform Scotland's public services, are my top priorities. We continue to face one of the most challenging financial situations since devolution, putting significant pressures on our public finances.

In a short time, my team and I have taken important steps to ensure our public finances remain on a sustainable trajectory, targeting our funding and prioritising our spending to support our key missions, while also continuing to deliver the most progressive tax system in the UK.

The publication of the Medium Term Financial Strategy has been central to this work. It is underpinned by three pillars: focusing spending decisions on achieving our three critical missions, supporting sustainable, inclusive economic growth and the generation of tax revenues, and maintaining and developing our strategic approach to tax. It outlines our approach to addressing the challenges to the sustainability of our finances so that we can continue to deliver high quality public services in the face of high inflation, and it also details the failure of the UK Government funding to keep pace with it.

The first meeting of the external Tax Advisory Group has taken place, which will support the development and delivery of our longer-term tax strategy. As part of this, the group will review evidence and consider the appropriateness of tax reforms in the Scottish context. We have also reached an agreement with the UK Government on the Fiscal Framework Review, the first substantive

amendment to the Fiscal Framework since it was originally agreed in February 2016, which will give us more tools to manage tax volatility. While this additional flexibility is welcome, UK funding decisions are still the largest determinant of the Scottish Government's Budget, and we still do not have the full range of fiscal levers at our disposal to manage the scale of the challenges that we face.

The Verity House Agreement, our new agreement with Local Government, is a major milestone. This has reset and redefined the relationship between the Scottish Government and Local Government, setting out our shared priorities, how we will work together, and the principles which underpin our relationship. Together, we are building and supporting thriving communities with a focus on prevention, joined-up services, and addressing social harms.

We know that we need to change the way we deliver public services to continue helping people lead positive lives. We need to prioritise early support and prevention, ensuring services are able to provide targeted and tailored support that reflects the diverse needs of people and communities. This will improve people's quality of life across the country and help to reduce the demand for services in the future.



Setting out an ambitious ten-year programme of reform will require us to continue to work closely with the wider public sector, the third sector and business partners. This partnership approach will involve considering how power and resources should be shared between national government, Local Government, and our communities. Public service reform is central to how, together, we will respond to a challenging financial environment, make sure services are efficient and effective, and make the most impact on our commitments to reduce poverty and inequality, to support sustainable growth, and to deliver a just transition to net zero.

Work is also underway to progress the Rural Delivery Plan, setting out how all parts of the Scottish Government are delivering for Scotland's rural, coastal, and island communities – with a particular focus on transport, housing, social justice, repopulation, digital connectivity, and economic development.

We take building safety very seriously and are fully aware of significant issues with some Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC). We are working with the public sector and will ensure that measures are put into place where required so that people are safe and feel safe in buildings.

In May we introduced the Visitor Levy (Scotland) Bill which, if passed, will give councils the power to apply a levy on stays in overnight accommodation based on a percentage of the accommodation cost. We have established a new Planning Infrastructure and Place Advisory Group, bringing together experts to identify solutions to unlock opportunities for development and inform future prioritisation of infrastructure investment. We have also consulted on planning guidance to ensure we create a planning system which supports thriving communities to live well locally, providing multiple benefits for people and the environment.

As part of our New Deal for Business, we have continued to reset our relationship with the business community and to offer support where we can. Businesses within Scotland's two Green Freeports will be given tax relief when buying or leasing non-residential buildings or land to be used in a qualifying manner. The proposed Land and Buildings Transaction Tax relief will be available in designated tax sites within Inverness and Cromarty Firth and the Forth Green Freeports, an example of our businesses benefitting from the Green Freeport opportunities. Similarly, work is underway on our Regional Economic

Partnerships with Glasgow City Region and the North East – working in partnership with the Scottish and UK Governments – to deliver the two Scottish Investment Zones.

Tackling intersectional gender inequality requires effort across government and, while I will continue to work alongside the First Minister to support the National Advisory Council on Women and Girls (NACWG), our response to their recommendations can be seen across multiple portfolios, from addressing violence against women and girls, to the expansion of childcare and the incorporation of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in the Human Rights Bill.

Delivering in the year ahead

In the coming year, I will take forward the following critical activity.

Sustainable Scottish public finances

- Deliver the commitment made in the Medium Term Financial Strategy to review opportunities for more effective targeting of existing provision and services to support those who need it most, and reflect these in the Draft Budget.
- Further to the consultation on changes to the Council Tax treatment of second homes which closed in July, we will take initial steps to increase the levers available to councils by delivering secondary legislation – enabling councils to apply up to a 100% premium on Council Tax rates for second homes, and continue to discuss other options with Local Government based on the analysis of responses.
- Continue to deliver a fair and affordable Non-Domestic Rates package in the Budget, taking account of the engagement with businesses, through the New Deal for Business, and with Local Government.

- Publish an updated tax strategy alongside the Medium Term Financial Strategy in 2024. This will include consideration of the overall burden of taxes on individuals, households and businesses, and how we continue to deliver a progressive tax system in Scotland.
- Seek the devolution of powers to introduce a levy equivalent to the UK Government's Building Safety Levy for England, to allow us to work towards ensuring the residential development sector makes a fair contribution to the costs of the Scottish Government's Cladding Remediation Programme, which, together with the Cladding Remediation Bill, will help to safeguard homeowners and residents by remediating unsafe cladding that presents a risk to life.
- Introduce an Aggregates Tax Bill to Parliament, which will set out the key arrangements for a devolved tax on the commercial exploitation of aggregates in Scotland.

Public Service Reform

- Deliver a more efficient approach to public sector property management through the new Single Scottish Estate programme, saving public funds, reducing the public sector property footprint, and enabling progress towards our net zero targets.
- Commence the Four Day Working Week public sector pilot by the end of this calendar year, to assess the wellbeing, environmental, and productivity benefits the Four Day Working Week could bring.
- Focus on service delivery and leadership skills, continuing to work closely with public bodies on our public service reform programme – helping to ensure their work remains affordable in 2024-25 and sustainable in future years, while improving outcomes, reducing inequalities, and preventing harm.

- Maximise the impact of public procurement through progressive procurement policy and practice as a key pillar of our Community Wealth Building approach – working closely with public, private, and third sector partners – driving consistency of application, leveraging collaborative buying power, and promoting opportunities to advance sustainability, including climate action, Fair Work, and community benefits through public supply chains.
- Deliver a framework for digital service transformation with a focus on end-to-end services, including work to catalogue assets available across the public sector, and continue the roll out and development of digital identity, payment and cloud services, and other common components – working closely with Local Government partners to deliver, as well as to share best practice.
- Work with island authorities with an ambition to develop alternative governance arrangements, including Single Authority type models, and agree place-specific reforms which offer the greatest potential to improve outcomes for local people.
- Complete the Democracy Matters national conversation and use the findings to agree new arrangements for inclusive decision making in our towns, villages, and neighbourhoods.
- Review the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 to ensure it is fit for purpose, explore how communities can be further empowered, and improve community planning (covered by Part 2 of the Act) to support the shared ambitions within the Verity House Agreement.
- Support local partners to embed and expand person-centred service change by working to share and scale the approach of pathfinder projects in Glasgow and Dundee in other areas of Scotland, helping to support families out of poverty by testing innovative models through targeted local approaches, anchored by place-based principles.

Working with Local Government

- Progress our shared programme of work with COSLA under the Verity House Agreement, in particular a revised Fiscal Framework between the Scottish Government and Local Government.
- Support Mark Ruskell MSP with the reconsideration of the European Charter of Local Self Government Incorporation (Scotland) Bill, as committed to in the Verity House Agreement.
- Continue the Joint Working Group on sources of Local Government funding, to identify further options for reforms to Council Tax, and to explore other potential revenue raising levers which deliver greater flexibility over financial arrangements, improve accountability for the delivery of national priorities, including net zero objectives, whilst ensuring maximum value for money, and continue progressing the Visitor Levy Bill to further deliver these aims, subject to parliamentary process.
- Continue planning reform, including digital transformation of the system and the introduction of regulations and guidance on new Masterplan Consent Areas, and further permitted development rights, to simplify and streamline processes for investors.
- Continue to deliver place-based investment and community-led regeneration, investing £70 million in our communities to help reduce inequalities and support inclusive economic development in disadvantaged and fragile communities across Scotland – transforming vacant and derelict land to attract investment, and supporting the delivery of low carbon, affordable housing and new green infrastructure to help enable the transition to net zero.

- Work with public sector anchor organisations, Local Government, the third sector, and businesses to develop legislative proposals and other actions to support Community Wealth Building, with sustainable business growth and high quality jobs in communities across Scotland.
- Lead work across government to deliver the commitment to Whole Family Wellbeing investment to support Children’s Services Planning Partnerships and local authorities in the provision of preventative, holistic family support.
- Progress work to reform and modernise Compulsory Purchase Orders, starting with the appointment of an expert advisory group in 2023-24, and implement new infrastructure levy regulations by spring 2026.
- Continue to consider the justification for, and practical operation of, Compulsory Sales Orders.
- Consider the recommendations on councillor remuneration, expected to be provided in late 2023 by the Scottish Local Authority Remuneration Committee, with a view to considering how these can improve diversity across elected members.

Equalities

- Continue to deliver support to our most fragile communities through our £9 million Investing in Communities Fund, which prioritises key areas tackling poverty and inequality, including child poverty, community-led regeneration, and supporting a just transition to net zero.

Women and girls

- Work alongside the First Minister to support the vital work of the National Advisory Council on Women and Girls, including continuing to take forward their recommendations as the Scottish Government continues to drive forward action to tackle intersectional gender inequality.

COVID Inquiries

- Sponsor the Scottish COVID-19 Inquiry, including providing operational support as its Chair considers necessary and appropriate, and oversee the Scottish Government’s response to both the Scottish Inquiry and the UK Inquiry into the handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, in order to learn lessons for future pandemic preparedness.



Cabinet Secretary for Wellbeing Economy, Fair Work and Energy

Neil Gray MSP

Our vision is for a wellbeing economy – an economy which meets the needs and aspirations of people and provides opportunities for all. We want our businesses to thrive and for their success to benefit all of society. This is critical to our three key missions. A genuine wellbeing economy will reduce poverty and support high quality public services. We will ensure this happens, backed by public and private investment, and informed by our Wellbeing Economy Expert Group and through our international engagement with the Wellbeing Economy Governments network.

We must ensure that our economy is fair, green, and growing, and benefits all of Scotland's communities and people. While we are rightly proud of the progress we have made, we know there is more to do. Scotland has the people, skills and resources to transform our economy and secure the economic opportunities and benefits of a just transition to net zero. This is how we will protect the planet, improve living standards, create good and sustainable jobs, increase wages, and attract investment. Creating good jobs and increasing wages is one of the best ways to support our anti-poverty agenda. A vibrant economy will boost the tax revenues that sustain high quality public services.

The New Deal for Business is about creating a trusting and meaningful partnership with business, focused on common priorities. It has fairness and wellbeing at its heart. We need our businesses and the communities they are part of to thrive. And we need our businesses to invest and innovate to drive the transition to the green economy. Working closely with business through the New Deal for Business Group, we have jointly prioritised ten key recommendations that will make the most

immediate difference to how we work with business to deliver an innovative, successful, growing economy that increases wellbeing.

The current economic environment is putting pressure on business and there are major challenges ahead too, not least in the transition to net zero. That is why we are committed to reviewing the cumulative impact of devolved regulations and to acting where needed. We will push forward a programme of regulatory reform, including putting in place a process for business to propose devolved regulations they feel are no longer required for removal if a good case can be made. We will also consider proactive regulatory changes which support businesses in Scotland, especially our small businesses and social enterprises.

Entrepreneurship is at the heart of our National Strategy for Economic Transformation, with Scotland having the potential to become a leading European start-up nation. We continue to build world class infrastructure that will create and scale more successful businesses. Higher and further education are at the very heart of our entrepreneurial ecosystem and our Entrepreneurial Campuses Blueprint

details how we will work together to create internationally competitive clusters of start-ups and scale-ups. There is a moral and economic duty to support greater diversity amongst our entrepreneurs and we have therefore committed to taking forward the recommendations of the recent Pathways Review of Women in Entrepreneurship.

Innovation is crucial for a thriving wellbeing economy and our National Innovation Strategy sets out how we will deliver on our ambition to make Scotland one of the most innovative nations in the world. This will improve access to investment, increase the commercialisation of research and build clusters of businesses in sectors where Scotland can compete on the world stage. It will also ensure that successful industries such as tourism and financial services remain competitive and continue to be supported.

Our enterprise agencies and Local Government have a long history of supporting businesses and economic development and we will work in partnership on a programme of reform that will ensure a clear focus on our shared priorities, make best use of Artificial Intelligence, digital and data, and make it easier for businesses of all sizes to get the support they need.

Our reform of the education and skills system will continue to ensure that we have the skilled workforce and talent pool to attract investment and meet Scotland's economic needs. Our focus on securing quality inward investment is already reaping rewards as Scotland continues to be the most attractive location outside London for inward investment, with more than 8,500 jobs created last year.

Recognising the impact of the UK Government's post-Brexit immigration policies on our labour market, we will continue to work with our Talent Attraction Industry Advisory Group to attract workers, including entrepreneurs, from across the rest of the UK, as well as internationally, and to promote Scotland as a career destination. As set out by

the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, we will also launch a Talent Attraction and Migration Service.

Scotland is at the forefront of the clean energy transition and our green jobs revolution is underway. Earlier this year we consulted on our draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan, which sets out the importance of the development of Scotland's future energy system for our economy. We are backing this up with almost £5 billion of investment in the net zero energy economy in Scotland over this parliamentary term.

We are ensuring that economic prosperity and investment is shared across our communities and regions. This includes establishing Green Freeports in the Firth of Forth and in Inverness and Cromarty Firth, promoting regeneration and high quality job creation and fostering an innovative environment. Regional Economic Partnerships in both Glasgow City Region and the North East are working with the Scottish and UK Governments to deliver two Scottish Investment Zones. These partnerships will build on local strengths, boosting investment, innovation and productivity, while promoting Fair Work and wellbeing in each region.

Delivering in the year ahead

In the coming year, I will take forward the following critical activity as we continue to transform and grow Scotland's economy.

Working with business

- Reset the relationship with business through implementing recommendations made by the New Deal for Business Group, including on the development and implementation of regulation.
- Work with business to develop a process for identifying, considering and if appropriate removing regulations no longer required, and to propose new regulations to support businesses in Scotland, especially our small businesses.



- Bring business representatives and other stakeholders together to advise on the successful implementation of new regulations through the Regulatory Review Group and ensure the consistent and effective use of the Business and Regulatory Impact Assessment, with businesses engaged from the earliest stage of policy development.
- Work with business to address Scotland's labour market participation challenges, starting with a focus on health and the needs of parents, particularly those in the six priority groups, so that this helps to reduce child poverty – recognising that women are more likely to take on caring responsibilities, this will include continuing to support and promote flexible working from day one of employment.

Supporting small businesses

- Build on the work of the New Deal for Business Group in relation to Non-Domestic Rates and invite the views of members on priorities, alongside the considerations of the Tax Advisory Group, to inform decisions in the Budget.
- Establish a new Small Business Unit in the Scottish Government to work more closely with small businesses and ensure

they are heard during policy development, building good practice in participation and engagement.

- Work with Local Government and our agencies to transform the way we support small businesses, improving the way we collect and hold data about businesses across the public sector so we can target support better and make it easier for businesses across Scotland to access the support available to them.
- Work with the Scottish Council for Development and Industry (SCDI) and other representatives of small business to deliver a three-year programme to raise productivity and deliver cost savings for small businesses.
- Work with business to maintain and improve prompt payment in public supply chains.
- Seek action from the UK Government to ease the current pressures on Scottish businesses, including through expansion of shortage occupation lists and a VAT reduction on Small and Medium-sized Enterprise energy bills.

Delivering Fair Work for all

- Boost wages by increasing the number of employers who pay at least the Real Living Wage including through Fair Work

conditionality for grants, introducing sectoral Fair Work agreements, and improving outcomes by delivering the Fair Work Action Plan.

- Work alongside business, Local Government and the third sector to deliver person-centred employability support, helping those who face barriers to labour market participation into work, with a particular focus on parents, helping to meet our child poverty targets.

Supporting entrepreneurship and innovation

- Increase support for Scotland's entrepreneurs and the programmes that help them succeed, including greater backing for proven initiatives such as Scottish Edge and the Scottish Ecosystem Fund and focus our enterprise agencies on creating the conditions in which businesses start and scale successfully.
- Make it easier for everyone to start and scale a business in Scotland by delivering the vision of the Pathways Report by Ana Stewart and Mark Logan, with the launch of new pre-start centres and pop-ups designed to encourage women and other under-represented groups to become entrepreneurs and get the support they need to access funding and advice.
- Support the development of globally competitive clusters of businesses in high-value sectors such as energy transition, health and life sciences, advanced manufacturing, and the application of data and digital technologies through our Cluster Development Programme, as well as simplifying access to innovation funding and ring-fencing a significant proportion of public sector innovation funding for key sectors.
- Increase our backing for the development of Scotland's universities as entrepreneurial campuses and ensure that the new Techscaler network offers high quality education programmes to entrepreneurs.
- Undertake an independent review of how we maximise the potential of employee-owned cooperatives and social enterprises and

ensure that social entrepreneurs play a key part in the growth of Scotland as a Start-Up Nation.

- Continue to invest over £600 million in the broadband networks of the future, through the Reaching 100% (R100) broadband programme, and support the Scotland 5G Centre to launch the seventh 5G Innovation Hub – a 5G test network that will support Scotland's businesses to develop and adopt new cutting edge digital technologies and applications.
- Provide additional targeted investment to enhance the capacity of our renewables supply chain to trade internationally and identify critical markets to export to, consolidating the strength of our supply chains through targeted inward investment.

Green growth and energy

- Develop a Green Industrial Strategy, setting out how we will help businesses and investors to realise the enormous economic opportunities of the global transition to net zero and create good, well-paid jobs across Scotland in sectors such as offshore wind and hydrogen, and support the development of sectoral Just Transition Plans.
- Publish and start implementing a new Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan, providing policy certainty for consumers, workers, businesses and investors by setting a clear direction for the future of Scotland's energy sector and the actions that we will take to maximise the economic and social benefits from our transition to a future energy system and to ensure our energy security.
- Establish a sector deal with the onshore wind industry to help deliver our onshore wind ambition, maximising the benefits for Scotland's economy and communities and accelerating our consenting processes – underpinned by an ambition to halve the average determination time for section 36 applications to 12 months where there is no public inquiry.

- Continue to enhance Scotland's place as a world-leading destination for offshore wind investment, including updating guidance to further streamline offshore wind consenting processes and ensure the most efficient management of both pre-application and post-consent processes to shorten timeframes where possible.
- Publish a Solar Vision for Scotland, setting out our ambition for solar and how we will facilitate its growth.
- Continue to implement the Hydrogen Action Plan and use the Hydrogen Innovation Scheme and the Hydrogen Investment Programme, via the upcoming launch of the Green Hydrogen Fund, to develop Scotland's potential to become a leading nation in the production of reliable, competitive and sustainable hydrogen.
- Work with industry to accelerate decarbonisation and create energy transition opportunities at major industrial sites with the support of the Scottish Industry Energy Transformation Fund, the Energy Transition Fund and the Emerging Energy Technologies Fund.

Attracting investment and boosting exports

- Establish a dedicated Investment Unit in the Scottish Government to act on the forthcoming recommendations of the First Minister's Investor Panel and to provide a clear route for investor engagement.
- Learn from other jurisdictions that are attractive to investors, change the way the Scottish Government and its agencies work to attract investment at scale, raise our capacity and capability, and work closely with the Scottish National Investment Bank, the Scottish Futures Trust and our enterprise agencies to crowd in private investment and accelerate innovative investment in infrastructure.
- Drive forward a programme of targeted export support and promotion, including supporting the Scottish Chambers of Commerce International Trade Programme,

implement our Sector Export Plans for life sciences, technology and renewables for developing and delivering a sector export plan for hydrogen, and improve the trade deals and arrangements within which Scottish importers and exporters operate.

- Work with Scottish Development International to attract even more high quality inward investment to Scotland, reinforcing Scotland's position as the best place for inward investment in the UK outside London and deliver investment in the technologies required to achieve our ambitions in areas such as energy transition, offshore wind, hydrogen and space.
- Encourage the UK Government to work with the Scottish Government to undertake a meaningful review of how we can jointly support growth across Scotland's businesses, with a particular focus on how tax and economic policy can stimulate investment in key sectors such as renewables, life sciences, big data and Artificial Intelligence – as set out by the First Minister in a recent letter to the Prime Minister.

Thriving local and regional economies

- Support regional empowerment and growth by acting on the recommendations of the Regional Economic Policy Review and working with Local Government and other partners to develop Scotland's network of Regional Economic Partnerships, supporting our rural and island businesses, including tourism, and communities in particular.
- Transfer lead responsibility and new investment for a comprehensive masterplan for the Clyde Mission to Glasgow City Region and Argyll and Bute.
- Continue to empower all of Scotland's regions, and further develop this by considering Glasgow City Region's ambitions to create a metropolitan region and Edinburgh's Regional Economic Prosperity Framework, as a precursor to similar discussions with all regional economic partnerships across the country.



Cabinet Secretary for NHS Recovery, Health and Social Care

Michael Matheson MSP

The recovery and reform of Scotland's National Health Service is crucial to ensuring that we deliver sustainable services which provide the people of Scotland with the right care, at the right time and in the right place.

Backed by targeted investment, including our £1 billion NHS Recovery Plan, we are making significant progress. The range of reforms across primary and acute services will not only help speed the recovery from the pandemic, but they will also reduce unnecessary demand for services and develop new pathways of care that are better for patients as we face the health challenges of the coming years.

Through this plan, we are working to reduce waiting lists, with a continuing focus on the longest waits. We have seen a significant reduction in the longest waits since targets were announced last July, with over 80% of new outpatient specialities now having fewer than ten patients waiting more than two years.

Our £1.8 million investment in a new national digital dermatology programme is speeding up treatment, and we have formally opened the third National Treatment Centre (NTC) located in NHS Highland. Our investment of a further £3.6 million in Hospital at Home provides acute-level care at home and avoids hospital admissions, supporting more than 11,000 people in the last year.

We continue to improve cancer care, from prevention and diagnosis through to treatment. We expanded Rapid Cancer Diagnostic Services to NHS Lanarkshire and NHS Borders, and nearly 1,000 people have been seen by this service – with 12% of those being diagnosed with cancer. We have also published

a new ten-year Cancer Strategy and associated three-year action plan – underpinned by an understanding of what matters to the individual.

We are working towards the introduction of a National Care Service so that everyone has access to consistently high quality social care, whenever they need it. Getting this right will remove barriers, tackle inequalities and allow people to flourish by living independent lives in communities of their choice. It will also ease pressure on our NHS and continue the integration of community health and social care support.

With COSLA, we have given initial support to a national framework for social care and social work support, which would see Scottish Ministers, local authorities and NHS Boards share accountability. People have already begun to share their views through our national engagement events. In line with our shared commitment to improve social care, we will explore with Local Government and agree an approach to ending all non-residential social care support charges within the lifetime of this Parliament.

Our commitment to health and care staff is unwavering. Agenda for Change NHS staff will benefit from the largest overall investment in pay in a single year and a deal that includes improved terms and conditions, such as bringing forward a 36-hour working week. This



£568 million deal will ensure staff remain the best paid anywhere in the UK. Junior doctors have also accepted their single biggest pay rise since devolution and we will now embark on a journey of contract and pay bargaining reform with them. We will also implement the NHS dental payment reform model, which has been developed with the sector, by 1 November 2023.

Uniquely within the UK, there has been no industrial action in the health service in Scotland because the Scottish Government has faced up to a series of challenging negotiations over pay and conditions. We are grateful to unions for their continued engagement and both patients and staff have benefitted from our collective determination to reach fair agreements.

The launch of an international recruitment pilot will support the social care workforce. We are also taking ongoing action to hire an additional 800 nurses, midwives and allied health professionals from overseas, backed by £8 million of funding. Since March 2022, we have increased the number of professionals working in primary care multi-disciplinary teams by 518 to 4,731, meaning that the average practice now has access to more than five additional professionals.

We will utilise scientific and technological innovation to provide new diagnostic tools, improve patient flow and create new therapeutic options through our accelerated national innovation adoption pathway. This will embed realistic and value-based medicine, putting patients at the centre of decision making. We have also invested £20 million in surgical robots, boosting hospital capacity and delivering less invasive procedures for patients.

Underpinning support for our health and care systems is a commitment to improve the health of our nation, from supporting infant and maternal health and keeping The Promise, to promoting healthier active lifestyles, preventing ill health, and reducing health inequalities and poverty. To realise these ambitions, we will continue to work in collaboration with a range of partners across Scottish society, including our crucial third sector and business allies.

Our Women's Health Plan sets out actions, including the appointment of our first Women's Health Champion, to address health inequalities and improve health outcomes for women throughout their lives.

We also remain committed to increasing overall physical activity through investment in sport and active travel, as physical activity is vital to the wellbeing of the nation.

We awarded £15 million to grassroots and community-based projects supporting people affected by problem substance use, including residential rehabilitation, addiction support services and programmes working with children and families. We also provided an additional £30 million for community-based mental health support and published the Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy, which sets out our vision of a Scotland in which everyone achieves the best mental health and wellbeing possible. We are continuing to fund around 320 additional staff in Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) over the next five years, with the potential to increase capacity for CAMHS cases by over 10,000. Local authorities have also confirmed that access to counselling services through secondary schools is in place for all school pupils aged 10 and above in Scotland. We have also published a strategy to improve the quality of life for those living with dementia, their families and carers.

The National Green Theatres Programme ensures we continue to cut high emissions and waste generated in surgery while maintaining patient safety and quality of care.

The actions set out here, led by the establishment of a National Care Service and our commitment to enhancing primary care, not only tackle the issues we face now, but the ones we may face in the future. They are key steps in achieving our wider objective to reform and renew our health and social care services for decades to come.

We will not shy away from taking the difficult and necessary decisions to improve Scotland's public health.

Delivering in the year ahead

In the coming year, I will take forward the following critical activity.

NHS Recovery

- Continue to work with our NHS in its efforts to tackle waiting lists and protect planned care, including providing significant additional capacity in endoscopies, orthopaedics and general surgery by opening the new National Treatment Centre (NTC) in Forth Valley and the second phase of the NHS Golden Jubilee NTC by the end of 2023.
- Agree with NHS Boards their 2023-24 activity trajectories and plans and provide ongoing support from the Centre for Sustainable Delivery to improve productivity and efficiency, delivering better outcomes for patients.
- Improve consistency of provision and deliver improvements in health and social care to significantly reduce delayed discharge and hospital occupancy.
- Continue to expand Hospital at Home and other out of hospital pathways to reduce occupancy levels and improve flow for both unscheduled and planned care.

Supporting the NHS and social care workforce

- Commit to provide the necessary funding in the next Budget to increase the pay of social care workers in the PVI sectors in a direct care role – and those working in the PVI sector to deliver funded early learning and childcare – to at least £12 per hour, an increase that could be worth up to £2,000 per year for those on full-time contracts.
- Improve workforce planning, practice and culture with a focus on collaborative, compassionate leadership, wellbeing and equality to deliver a more sustainable and skilled workforce, supported by the commencement of the Health and Care (Staffing) (Scotland) Act 2019, and take forward the recommendations from the Nursing and Midwifery Taskforce.

- Implement the Agenda for Change review and revised pay bargaining processes for junior doctors to improve pay structures and future pay negotiations.

Investing in primary and community care

- Improve access to GP services through further expansion to multi-disciplinary teams, which will deliver more appointments with a wider range of healthcare professionals, and embed access principles for patients and practices to ensure services meet local needs.
- Establish the Expert Medical Generalist GP role and future career pathway with professional bodies.
- Progress the National Centre for Remote and Rural Health and Care, expected to launch in October 2023, to improve primary and community services.
- Deliver targeted support to practices serving the most disadvantaged communities in NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde and work with local areas to ensure vital specialist services such as Community Link Workers can respond to local needs.

Improving cancer outcomes

- Improve cancer outcomes by April 2024 through implementation of our new Cancer Strategy, using the following key metrics: cancer patients receive their first cancer treatment within 31 days of decision to treat, and cancer patients receive their first cancer treatment within 62 days of urgent suspicion of cancer referral.

National Care Service

- Deliver the National Care Service legislation, subject to the agreement of Parliament, to ensure consistency of provision and improvements in social care, social work and community health support, working in partnership with people who access and deliver services, trade unions, Local Government and the third sector.

- Continue funding the voluntary sector Short Breaks Fund ahead of including a right to short breaks for carers in the National Care Service Bill.

Independent Living Fund

- Reopen the Independent Living Fund on a phased basis, with an initial £9 million in 2024-25 to enable up to 1,000 additional disabled people with the most complex needs to access the support they need and deserve to live independent lives.

Population health

- Continue to embed Medication Assisted Treatment standards, increase access to residential rehabilitation, develop a protocol for co-occurring mental health conditions and substance use, and co-produce alcohol and drug service standards for young people.
- Support proposals to establish a Safer Drug Consumption Facility and continue to advocate for evidence-based drug law reform to enhance our efforts to reduce deaths and improve lives.
- Support the development of a Charter of Rights for people who use drugs, to increase accountability, monitoring and challenge in the context of the forthcoming Human Rights Bill.
- Publish a report on five years of Minimum Unit Pricing in September 2023 alongside a consultation on its future, both in terms of price and the continuation of the scheme, and undertake a review of the alcohol marketing consultation, publishing responses by the end of 2023.
- Publish a refreshed Tobacco Action Plan in autumn 2023 which outlines decisive action to remain on track to make Scotland tobacco-free by 2034.
- Take action to reduce vaping among non-smokers and young people and to tackle the environmental impact of single-use vapes, including consulting on a proposal to ban their sale and other appropriate measures.

Sport

- Convene a working group, including representatives from COSLA, sportscotland and sporting and community organisations, to explore how community access to facilities, such as schools, can be maximised and enhanced, and identify areas of best practice across the country.

Mental health

- Publish the new Mental Health & Wellbeing Delivery Plan and accompanying Workforce Action Plan in the autumn and commission Health Boards to produce trajectories for when they expect to meet the CAMHS waiting times standard.
- Establish a new Mental Health and Capacity Reform Programme to begin the process of updating and modernising our mental health and capacity legislation to enhance the protection of people's rights.
- Consult on a Learning Disability, Autism and Neurodiversity Bill by the end of 2023, which will aim to ensure that the rights of neurodivergent people, including autistic people and people with learning disabilities, are respected, protected and championed.

Abortion services

- Work closely with Gillian Mackay MSP to deliver her Member's Bill for safe access zones, and subsequently undertake a review of abortion law to identify potential proposals, by the end of this parliamentary term, for reforms to ensure that abortion services are first and foremost a healthcare matter.

Miscarriage care and support

- Improve miscarriage care so women do not wait until a third miscarriage to receive tailored support, including access to progesterone prescriptions and separate spaces in hospitals within maternity wards for people who suffer a miscarriage, and launch a Certificate and Memorial Book of Pregnancy and Baby Loss Prior to 24 Weeks.
- Work to ensure people who experience miscarriage or stillbirth receive three days of paid leave, implementing this across the public sector and calling on the UK Government to make the necessary changes to employment law to make this available for everyone.

Gender identity healthcare

- Continue work to improve gender identity healthcare, to tackle waiting times and adopt a human rights based, person-centred and multidisciplinary approach to improving this healthcare provision.



Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice

Shirley-Anne Somerville MSP

Strong and inclusive communities, defined by equality and good opportunities, are where the people of Scotland thrive. Communities work best when they work together to improve social justice, reduce inequality and tackle poverty. It is only by continuing to grow and nurture diverse communities in every part of Scotland that we will deliver on our three core missions.

Building on the strong foundations we have laid, driving forward action at greater pace and scale for us to meet our statutory child poverty targets remains at the heart of the work of my portfolio, as it does for all in Cabinet. Due to the policies of this government, an estimated 90,000 fewer children are expected to live in relative and absolute poverty this year, with poverty levels 9% lower than they would have otherwise been.

Only with the full economic and fiscal powers of an independent nation can we eradicate inequality and poverty. In the meantime, we will use our fixed budget and all the powers at our disposal to do all we can to reduce child poverty across Scotland.

Scotland cannot wait for the UK Government to act, so this government is taking action now, delivering vital support to low income families. More than £711 million has been spent in the last five financial years to mitigate the effects of UK Government policy, including investment in Discretionary Housing Payments and the Scottish Welfare Fund. Over 316,000 children were receiving the Scottish Child Payment at the end of June 2023 and the total amount of the benefit paid out since its February 2021 launch now stands at £352 million. This support, which is unique to Scotland in the United Kingdom, has provided families with crucial financial support, reducing poverty and guarding against the full impacts of the cost of living crisis.

Work is ongoing to deliver new Scottish Government social security benefits and ensure Social Security Scotland is providing a quality service underpinned by dignity, fairness, and respect, including through the Social Security (Amendment) Bill.

Practical support continues to be targeted to those most in need. We are supporting organisations through the Social Isolation and Loneliness Fund and have agreed funding for a new £1.8 million Cash First Programme to improve the response to those experiencing financial crisis and help reduce the demand for emergency food parcels, providing dignity and choice.

We are working with Disabled People's Organisations to implement an Immediate Priorities Plan that delivers actions to help meet the barriers faced by disabled people. In doing so, we commit to improving our own disability competence within government to improve our policy making and its impact on disabled people. In addition, we will continue to work with partners to advance equality for those with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. This includes engaging with the Older People's Strategic Action Forum to identify and develop solutions to barriers faced by older people.



We are committed to our “Team Scotland” approach exemplified by the First Minister’s Anti-Poverty Summit, listening to and working with key partners, campaigners, cross-party leaders and those with direct experience of poverty – helping to inform Scotland’s choices to tackle poverty and reduce inequality.

We continue to look for new and innovative ways to reduce poverty and inequality – this includes continuing our work with the Minimum Income Guarantee Expert Group to consider feasible steps towards delivering a Minimum Income Guarantee in Scotland. The Expert Group will report on their recommendations in 2024. We are calling on the UK Government to legislate to put an Essentials Guarantee in place to adequately cover the cost of essentials, including food, transport, energy and to ensure that deductions, such as debt repayments to government, sanctions, or as a result of the benefit cap, can never pull support below this level.

Ensuring people have a safe and secure place to live is fundamental to delivering our missions. This is why we have laid regulations seeking to extend the emergency rent cap for most private tenants and the additional eviction protections across the majority of the rented sector until

31 March 2024. We continue to work with COSLA to deliver the Ending Destitution Together strategy to support people subject to the UK Government’s increasingly draconian immigration rules and the specific policy of No Recourse to Public Funds – giving crisis funds to people facing destitution and supporting access to legal advice.

We remain committed to delivering 110,000 affordable homes by 2032 and we are proud that an estimated 3,480 households with children have been helped into affordable housing in the year to March 2023. Keeping social rents lower than market rents benefits approximately 140,000 children in poverty each year. In our response to the recommendations from the Temporary Accommodation Task and Finish Group, we have set out the actions we will take to reduce the number of people living in temporary accommodation. As part of these actions, we have committed to support a £60 million national acquisition plan in 2023-24 through the Affordable Housing Supply Programme.

The Scottish Government will take action to tackle structural and systemic barriers to equality, including introducing our world leading Human Rights Bill, and I remain committed to ensuring Scotland remains

a global leader in Equality, Inclusion, and Human Rights. We are working with COSLA and the Scottish Refugee Council to refresh the New Scots refugee integration strategy. This will continue Scotland's pioneering and collaborative approach to supporting refugees, people seeking asylum, displaced people, and our communities.

As the conflict in Ukraine continues, Scotland has stood shoulder to shoulder with Ukrainians fleeing the country. We have provided sanctuary for more than 24,000 people displaced from Ukraine since March 2022, 20% of the total taken by the UK as a whole. Our Ukraine Longer Term Resettlement Fund of up to £50 million supports local authorities and Registered Social Landlords to bring empty homes back into use. We have already approved funding for almost 1,200 homes and there is a healthy pipeline of applications and expressions of interest in the Fund. We are also proud to have established the statutory Guardianship Scotland service, investing £1 million in 2023-24 to support vulnerable children who have arrived in Scotland alone.

Delivering in the year ahead

In the coming year, I will take forward the following critical activity.

Tackling poverty

- Invest £405 million in the Scottish Child Payment this year, improving the lives of over 300,000 children across Scotland while continuing to drive forward cross-government programmes which support the three drivers of child poverty reduction (cost of living, income from employment and income from social security and benefits in kind) in key areas, such as parental employability, early learning and childcare, mental health, transport, and affordable housing – building on our place-based partnership work with local authorities and local partners to change how services are delivered.
- Establish a new Ministerial group, focusing on the delivery of Best Start, Bright Futures across government to strengthen our approach and more closely co-ordinate policy to maximise impact on child poverty, ensuring that we take a whole family wellbeing approach to our child poverty work, which will enable us to support the Government's commitment to keeping The Promise.
- Continue to invest in a package of funding for income maximisation, welfare and debt advice services, supporting at least 40,000 people with free debt advice and increasing the accessibility of advice in education, health and community settings.

Social Security

- Invest £5.3 billion in Scottish Government benefits in 2023-24, supporting over 1.2 million people, as well as improving the support we provide to carers by introducing the Carer Support Payment to replace Carer's Allowance in Scotland – working closely with the Minimum Income Guarantee Expert Group to consider the Social Renewal Advisory Group's recommendation to model a minimum income guarantee for unpaid carers, the majority of whom are women, and who have been hard hit by the cost of living crisis.
- Continue to drive forward the safe and secure transfer of cases from the Department of Work and Pensions to Social Security Scotland, bringing tens of thousands more people into our social security system.
- Support families by introducing regulations that remove income thresholds and so increase eligibility for Best Start Foods to around an additional 20,000 people from February 2024.
- Support care leavers into employment, including through the Job Start Payment, and the Care Experienced Internship Programme at Social Security Scotland, as we work to keep The Promise.

- Undertake an independent review of Adult Disability Payment to ensure the benefit continues to meet the needs of disabled people, building on the analysis of a consultation on the mobility component of Adult Disability Payment published in August.
- Support people with the cost of living by increasing the Scottish Child Payment, Funeral Support Payment and all disability and carers benefits in line with inflation.

Preventing and ending homelessness and supplying affordable, safe homes

- Work with Local Government and stakeholders to reduce the number of people in temporary accommodation by preventing homelessness wherever possible and, where homelessness cannot be prevented, acting quickly to move people into settled homes.
- Continue to promote Housing First, which offers a mainstream settled tenancy and wraparound support, as the default response for people experiencing homelessness who have multiple and complex needs, including people whose homelessness is made harder by experiences of trauma and problem substance use.
- Introduce the Housing Bill to create powers for the introduction of long term rent controls – creating new tenants’ rights and introduce new duties aimed at the prevention of homelessness.
- Invest £752 million this year through our Affordable Housing Supply Programme as we continue to support the delivery of affordable homes to meet housing needs and our longer-term target of 110,000 affordable homes by 2032, of which at least 70% will be available for social rent and 10% in our rural and island communities.

- Publish a Remote, Rural and Islands Housing Action Plan this autumn to help retain and attract people in rural and island communities – making available up to £25 million from our Affordable Housing Supply Programme budget over the period 2023-28 to identify homes for key workers in rural communities.
- Complete a stock survey of relevant medium and high rise buildings and introduce a Cladding Remediation Bill to help safeguard homeowners and residents by creating a new power to undertake urgent measures to remediate unsafe cladding that presents a risk to life.
- Consider the recommendations of the short-life Housing Review Group which will be provided in the coming weeks, identifying those actions that can be taken by local authorities to address existing housing pressures within their current powers and budget – particularly around greater efficiency and effectiveness of resource use.

New Scots, population and migration

- Transition from an emergency response to support a holistic and rights-based approach to long term integration of people displaced from Ukraine, aligned with an updated New Scots refugee integration strategy.
- Respond to the challenge of depopulation, which is facing some parts of Scotland, through the publication of an Addressing Depopulation Action Plan, which will consider how we respond to the range of drivers impacting population decline including, but not limited to, access to public services, housing, transport and connectivity.
- Work with partners to deliver community-driven migration solutions which support local economies and public services and continue to press the UK Government to deliver, in partnership with Scottish Government and local communities, a Rural Visa Pilot.

- Introduce a Talent Attraction and Migration Service, providing immigration information and advice to employers looking to attract talent to Scotland, as well as supporting people considering Scotland, from across the UK and abroad, as a place to live and work.

Human Rights legislation and equalities

- Introduce a landmark Human Rights Bill, and invite the Scottish Parliament to bring back the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill for reconsideration stage, to deliver legislation that protects and enhances a fuller range of human rights within the limits of devolved competence – improving the lives of those most marginalised and vulnerable in our society.
- Publish the cross-government Non-Binary Equality Action Plan and, subject to consultation and parliamentary approval, progress the Scottish Government's commitment to a Bill on ending conversion practices. As the next step in delivering on this commitment, we will publish a consultation on proposals for legislative change by the end of this calendar year.
- Publish an Immediate Priorities Plan for disabled people that recognises the disproportionate impact the cost of living crisis and the pandemic has had on this group, setting out clear actions for change.
- Invest in a new Anti-Racism Observatory which will provide oversight and support for the Scottish Government and the public sector to develop anti-racism approaches, so that we can continue to eradicate racism in Scotland.
- Consult on a mainstreaming strategy, as part of our commitment to embed equality and human rights throughout government and the public sector.

Supporting and collaborating with the Third Sector

- As part of our commitment to support the third sector with Fairer Funding we will produce a plan to deliver improvements including greater clarity and consistency of existing arrangements, recognising the sector's strategic role in enabling the transformation and delivery of person-centred services for the people of Scotland.
- Building on the recent passage of the Charities (Regulation and Administration) (Scotland) Act 2023, we will work with the third sector and partners to develop the scope for a wider review of charity regulation.



Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs

Angela Constance MSP

The safety and security of the public is my top priority. It is fundamental to the success of our three missions. Genuine equality and opportunity are dependent on ensuring we live in a just, safe, and resilient Scotland where everyone can reach their potential and contribute fully to society.

Building more resilient communities means we will always support our core public services, including Police Scotland and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS), and continue to improve understanding and preparedness for a range of hazards and threats through multi-agency planning.

We must prevent crime and harm in our communities, particularly where we know some individuals are more likely to experience crime than others. And when crime does occur, reduce its harm whilst ensuring everyone has access to justice enabling them to uphold their legal rights. We must also continue to tackle all forms of violence, including violence and sexual offending against women and girls, and ensure robust justice responses and support for survivor services.

We will continue to improve the experience of justice – ensuring that victims and witnesses of crime are treated with compassion and are at the heart of the justice system. We have already reduced the backlog of cases in our justice system by over a third and will continue to improve the efficiency of justice and ultimately reduce waiting times. We must also ensure that justice services work effectively with people to address their offending behaviours, therefore reducing reoffending, reducing crime, and creating safer communities.

Victims of crime are at the heart of our work to build a trauma-informed, person-centred justice system. The Victims, Witnesses, and Justice Reform (Scotland) Bill proposes a significant package of reforms specifically designed to improve the experience of victims and witnesses of crime in the justice system.

We have continued to support keeping The Promise for care experienced children, young people and their families by progressing the passage of the Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Bill through Parliament. To support the Bill, we will be expanding investment in alternatives to custody for children, thereby ending new placements of under 18s in Young Offenders Institutions by the end of 2024. The recent National Community Justice Strategy delivery plan includes a series of measurable actions to shift the balance between custody and justice in the community.

The Bail and Release from Custody (Scotland) Act 2023 was passed by Parliament in June and work is now underway to ensure that remand is focused on those that pose the greatest risk to public safety and that improved support is available for people leaving prison.



Our Police (Ethics, Conduct and Scrutiny) (Scotland) Bill aims to ensure allegations of misconduct are dealt with more transparently and effectively. It will strengthen the police complaints and misconduct system by enhancing scrutiny and underlining the importance of maintaining the high standards expected of Scotland's police officers.

Delivering in the year ahead

In the coming year, I will take forward the following critical activity.

Prioritising our public services and delivering public service reform

- Support justice agencies to reduce court backlogs, including aiming to end the backlog of summary cases during 2024 and reduce waiting times for justice.
- Act on the findings of His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland Thematic Review of the servicing of mental health demand on policing.
- Support Police Scotland in its plan to roll out body worn cameras to officers over the next two years, to over 14,000 officers and staff from 2024.

- Following the successful digital evidence pilot, Police Scotland will seek to build on the Scottish Government's investment to make it easier to submit digital evidence to report poor road user behaviour, in support of making Scotland's roads safer for all – especially for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Support the SFRS to ensure the safety, health and wellbeing of all their staff who work to protect communities, including ensuring progress concerning decontamination requirements.

Supporting everyone to feel safe in their communities

- Work with partners to implement the new Violence Prevention Framework, including the expansion of the Navigator programme to support more people to stabilise their lives and reduce crime, the development of a social media campaign to support young people away from violence, and the adoption of bystander approaches to empower individuals to challenge their peers in a safe way.

- Continue to reinvest money recovered under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 – through our Cash Back for Communities programme – into diversionary activities for young people most at risk of being involved in antisocial behaviour, offending or reoffending to support the communities that are most affected by crime.
- Publish a Hate Crime Strategy Delivery Plan, setting out our immediate and longer-term activity in support of the Hate Crime Strategy, including implementation of the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Act 2021 in early 2024.
- Work with SFRS to ensure continuing priority is given to the implementation of their wildfire strategy.

Improving the experience of justice for victims and survivors

- Progress implementation of the trauma-informed justice knowledge and skills framework and improve justice system communications, ensuring we are able to compassionately recognise and respond to a victim's or a survivor's trauma and avoid re-traumatisation.
- Act on the considerations of the Women's Justice Leadership Panel to address gender inequality and improve women's experiences within the justice system, to help achieve a gender-informed justice system.
- Launch Bairns' Hoose Pathfinders in autumn 2023, a key action in our keeping The Promise Implementation Plan and Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan, enabling a whole-system approach for child victims and witnesses of abuse and harm.

Tackling violence against women and girls

- Establish a Ministerial Oversight Group to ensure momentum on delivering the cross-portfolio Equally Safe Strategy, including the refresh of the priorities.
- Consider our wider approach to tackling domestic abuse and work to develop Scotland's first national multi-agency Domestic Homicide Review model.
- Bring forward legislation to criminalise misogynistic conduct as informed by the public consultation on Baroness Helena Kennedy KC's report.

Reducing reoffending and limiting the negative effects of short term imprisonment

- Progress delivery of the National Community Justice Strategy by working with Community Justice Partners to drive improvement and advance towards the longstanding aim of encouraging a person-centred, trauma-informed, and rehabilitative approach.
- Continue to invest in the prison estate, working towards replacing prisons in Inverness and Glasgow to ensure modern facilities that promote rehabilitation into communities and reduced reoffending.
- Continue to provide trauma-informed care and management to women in custody, including through the new national facility HMP & YOI Stirling and Community Custody Units in Dundee and Glasgow, supporting the best chance for women to not reoffend and to return successfully to their communities.



Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills

Jenny Gilruth MSP

Delivering excellence and equity in Scottish education is my top priority, and I know that to do so will require the highest quality of learning and teaching in our classrooms. It is also essential that we have strong leadership and meaningful engagement with the students, teachers, families, support staff and communities that rely on our globally recognised education system. We need to collaborate with our partners – parents and carers, Local Government and the third sector – in delivering an education system that works for all of Scotland’s young people and adult learners.

We have seen good progress in closing the poverty-related attainment gap since the pandemic, particularly in primary school attainment. Supported by the £1 billion investment in the Scottish Attainment Challenge, local authorities have set ambitious goals for improvement. We are proud of our achievements, but raising attainment for all and making further progress in closing the poverty-related attainment gap is a project on which we remain absolutely focused.

The Scottish Government remains steadfastly committed to keeping The Promise to Scotland’s care-experienced children and young people and has made good progress towards this. The new Scottish Recommended Allowance, recently agreed with COSLA, will ensure that foster and kinship carers across Scotland will receive at least a standard, national allowance to support them in caring for the children and young people they look after, which will benefit more than 9,000 children. We must, and will, keep more children at home where that is safe for them, and ensure that for those children that do require time in care settings they experience love, kindness, and compassion. To direct and support this commitment we will

establish a Cabinet Sub-Committee, chaired by the First Minister, to enable the cross-portfolio change required to improve outcomes for Scotland’s care experienced children, young people, adults, and families. The Cabinet Sub-Committee’s early tasks will include exploring the role that both prevention and philanthropy might play in delivering better outcomes.

Scotland needs a childcare system that works for all families. High quality, accessible and affordable childcare is critical to helping more parents and carers to take up, or sustain employment. Working together with Local Government and other partners, we want to transform the childcare system to make it fairer and more affordable.

Over the coming year, we will work with our partners to significantly expand our childcare programme, building on our existing School Age Childcare early adopter communities, adding new areas in Fife and Shetland and starting to test innovative models of childcare from 9 months to the end of primary school. We will also build on our national early learning offer to expand provision for families with a two-year-old, focused on those families who need it most.



Through our holistic programme of education and skills reform we are continuing our work to reshape the national public body landscape – reflecting on the conclusions from the National Discussion on Education and the Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment led by Professor Hayward – and through the publication of the Purpose and Principles for Post-School Education, Research and Skills.

However, we know that we must do more to ensure Scotland continues to build on its reputation for innovation, high quality further and higher education, and apprenticeships, underpinned by our world-leading universities and colleges.

We have introduced extended student financial support to those currently residing in Scotland who have been granted leave to enter or remain in the United Kingdom where they have also been resident for three years.

Through our investment and reforms, our priority will remain giving everyone the opportunity to develop the knowledge, skills, values and attributes that will enable them to fulfil their potential – protecting free tuition and continuing to take action to widen access to university.

Delivering in the year ahead

In the coming year, I will take forward the following critical activity.

Supporting children and young people

- Work with Local Government and other partners to develop the local infrastructure and services needed to provide childcare from nine months to the end of primary school in specific communities in six local authority areas.
- Through this community-based approach, test a new digital service to help parents and carers find, access and pay for childcare that best suits their needs, laying the foundations to transform the childcare system in the longer-term in a way that empowers parents and supports greater choice.
- Provide funding to uplift pay in the PVI sector to £12 per hour for those delivering funded Early Learning and Childcare – this action is needed now to support effective recruitment and retention of staff working in the sector.
- Scale up innovative pilots for recruiting and retaining childminders to grow that essential part of the workforce by 1,000 more.

- Work with local authority and other sectoral partners to phase in an expanded national offer for families with two-year-olds, focused on those who will benefit most. This will build on the foundations of the existing 1140 programme, which makes high quality early learning and childcare available to around a quarter of families with two-year-olds on the lowest incomes.

Reforming our education and skills system

- Set out plans for implementing reform of our education and skills bodies and put the voices of children, young people, and adult learners at their core, including responding to the recommendations of the Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment by Professor Hayward, the National Discussion on Education and the Independent Review of the Skills Delivery Landscape by James Withers, and the priorities arising from ‘Purpose and Principles for Post-School Education, Skills and Research’.
- Recruit an interim HM Chief Inspector who will play a critical role in driving quality improvement, providing strategic guidance and leadership to education inspection as part of a reform agenda.

Investing in our schools

- Continue to support schools and local authorities to improve the attainment of children and young people impacted by poverty through our investment in the Scottish Attainment Challenge, with a particular focus on literacy and numeracy – a progress update on ambitious local stretch aims will be published later this year.
- Rejoin the Trends in International Mathematics and Science (TIMSS) and Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), adding to the current evidence on Scotland’s education performance.

- Support our teaching profession by delivering the historic pay deal for teachers, which has a cumulative value of 14.6% over 28 months, and work with our partners on a joint campaign to promote teaching as a highly rewarding career with the opportunity to make a difference to the lives of children and young people, improving recruitment and retention and attracting more high quality individuals into teaching in areas where they are most needed.
- Continue to support reductions in the cost of the school day by funding the removal of core curriculum charges and continue to uplift the school clothing grant by inflation in 2024-25, which will mean that the value of the grant will increase again for the beginning of the next academic year.
- Work with COSLA in the coming year to prepare schools and infrastructure for the expansion of universal free school meal provision to Primary 6 and Primary 7 pupils during 2026, starting with those in receipt of the Scottish Child Payment and work with local authorities to ensure that school meals meet the highest standards of nutrition, recognising that this is vital to our children’s effective learning.
- Improve experiences and outcomes for children and young people with additional support needs by working with teachers to provide additional professional learning opportunities, continuing to support direct provision of services, and implementing and seeking to build on the Additional Support for Learning Action Plan.
- Continue to invest in our school estate in partnership with local authorities through the Learning Estate Investment Programme, which will provide new, modern, state of the art learning environments.

- Develop a digital strategy to help ensure digital provision supports the wider aims of the education system.
- Implement the strengthened Learning for Sustainability Action Plan and as part of this ensure that all young people have the opportunity to learn about the causes and effects of climate change, the role we can all play in preventing it, and the importance of climate justice.
- Further advance inclusive education in our schools through our Anti-Racism in Education Programme which will continue to embed anti-racist practice and principles in initial and ongoing professional development for teachers and educators, including the promotion of a decolonised curriculum which reflects diversity, social justice and Scotland's role in trans-Atlantic enslavement, as well as the development of robust measures for tackling racist incidents in schools.
- Publish a national framework to better support schools in tackling gender-based violence and sexual harassment, part of wider work to help ensure schools are safe spaces for all.
- Use the latest iteration of our Behaviour in Scottish Schools research to understand the ongoing impacts of COVID-19 on school culture, relationships, behaviour, and attendance, and work with local and national partners to ensure appropriate support is in place.

Investing in further and higher education and skills

- Launch a new Scottish Education Exchange Programme – building on an initial test and learn project that we are delivering in 2023-24, prioritising placements for disadvantaged groups and further demonstrate our commitment to EU and global partnerships with schools, colleges and universities including through working with these sectors.

- Lead development of a new funding model for post-school education provision which continues free tuition and improves the parity of living cost support on offer for those wishing to study part time or flexibly, and which continues to promote post-16 education as a positive destination for widening access students.
- Work with colleges to promote good governance, including bringing forward a statutory instrument to ensure trade union representatives on college boards.

Keeping The Promise

- Further support the facilitation and expansion of the Virtual School Head Teacher Network, formally respond to the recent review of the Children's Hearing System, launch a consultation on the support for care experienced young people when they become adults, publish our Whole Family Wellbeing investment approach to supporting the provision of preventative, holistic family support, and by the end of 2023, The Promise Scotland will report on its work on the scoping of national lifelong advocacy services.
- Continue to invest in primary prevention from pre-birth through the earliest years to ensure children have the nurturing care they need to improve their outcomes, ensuring we provide enhanced support for speech and language development during the critical window in the early years.

Scottish Languages Bill

- Introduce the Scottish Languages Bill to Parliament providing legal recognition for Gaelic and Scots, strengthening requirements for provision of Gaelic Medium Education, introducing measures to provide further protection for Gaelic within communities and introducing provision to strengthen support for Scots.



Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Net Zero and Just Transition

Màiri McAllan MSP

The twin crises of climate change and biodiversity loss are global challenges of unprecedented proportions. Tackling them is the collective fight of our lifetime, with implications for all the generations to come. With this past July already on record as the hottest month ever, it is clear these crises are no longer a distant threat. They are happening and affecting our lives right now in Scotland and around the world, contributing to wildfires, droughts and flooding. Climate change presents an existential threat to all our futures.

The necessity of climate leadership could not be more stark. This is a time for action, and we will continue to rise to this challenge – remaining open and honest with the people of Scotland about the steps we must all take, and the support we will offer, on this crucial journey.

We do not underestimate the scale of action required, and what change means for our daily lives, not least as we support people through the current cost of living crisis. At the same time, we do not have the luxury of postponing action or continuing to do things the way they have always been done. Change is necessary, and we are determined to manage it fairly, openly and thoughtfully. If managed well this change will bring us huge benefits: a greener, more biodiverse environment, cleaner air, new sources of economic vitality, greater energy security and healthier lives enriched from a better relationship with our environment.

We have already made progress on this vision. Between 1990 and 2021 our emissions halved while the economy grew by 55%, illustrating that the right kind of economic activity and growth can support a reduction in emissions. Building on this, we are determined to lead a truly just and fair transition as our society and economy adapt to climate change; one defined

by new, highly skilled jobs, rising investment, unlocked innovation and empowered communities.

A key early step in this has been publishing our draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan. We have followed this with discussion papers on three other key sectors as well as extensive engagement to ensure our forthcoming draft Just Transition Plans are co-designed and robust. Through our Just Transition Fund, we are enabling pioneering work in a range of sectors including electric vehicle battery recycling, offshore green hydrogen production and large-scale carbon sequestration and habitat restoration.

Meanwhile, we are taking bold and ambitious actions on net zero in the transport sector – not only by supporting children and young people to travel on buses for free, but helping operators, manufacturers, and energy and finance companies to change the market for zero emission bus travel through our Scottish Zero Emission Bus Challenge Fund. Our £20 million Active Travel Transformation Fund has brought forward the delivery of ambitious local authority-led infrastructure projects for the people of Scotland.



Fares have been frozen for a further six months on the Clyde and Hebrides and Northern Isles ferry networks, supporting our island communities who depend on these vital services. We have also ensured continuity of the Caledonian Sleeper Service by bringing it into Scottish Government ownership.

We are determined that our homes and buildings will be cleaner, greener and easier to heat, and so improving how we heat our homes is a top priority. We paved the way for heating decarbonisation by laying a new build heat standard and introduced new regulations to accelerate heat networks. Our new heat in buildings regulations will tackle one of Scotland's major sources of emissions and reduce the exposure of households and businesses to volatile gas prices.

Tackling the climate crisis also means protecting our natural environment by halting the loss of habitat and biodiversity. Loss of species and degradation of ecosystems and habitats pose real risks to Scotland's nature on which our future wellbeing depends.

That is why we have also scaled up our investment in nature restoration and are securing the future of Scotland's rainforest. We launched initiatives to establish a new national park and nature networks in partnership with local authorities. As Scotland continues to experience the damaging impact of climate change, we are working together with local authorities on plans to protect our people and assets from flooding caused by coastal erosion and, in February this year, published our Coastal Change Adaptation Planning Guidance.

As climate change is global in its reach, we will deepen our international leadership. Too often, it is the countries that have contributed least to carbon emissions that are suffering the worst impacts of climate change. We are continuing to champion international climate justice – pushing for bold action across the world and advocating for the human rights of those most impacted by climate-related disasters. We are backing our strong words with actions, such as our recent announcement on £24 million in support of climate justice projects.

Delivering in the year ahead

In the coming year, I will take forward the following critical activity.

Climate change

- Set out how we will continue to drive down emissions in a draft Climate Change Plan, with bold action across transport, heat, our natural environment, and other areas, demonstrating how our ambition will be realised while maximising opportunities for the economy, job creation, and health.
- Grow our national network of regional Community Climate Action Hubs, supporting local communities to develop place-based approaches to reduce emissions and become more climate resilient.
- Continue to play a leadership role in the global fight against climate change through our world first Climate Justice Fund and begin to deliver our Climate Just Communities programme to support communities across Rwanda, Malawi and Zambia.
- Host, with the First Minister, a meeting with key stakeholders to discuss ways forward to meet our climate ambitions ahead of COP28.

Adaptation

- Prepare for the consequences of global climate change by publishing a new Climate Change Adaptation Programme and consulting on Scotland's first Strategy for Flood Resilience.
- Build on our £170 million investment in Scotland's water and sewerage services and review of water industry policy, and continue to assess how water, sewerage and drainage services can adapt to the impacts of climate change to avoid water scarcity through future legislation.

Just transition

- Publish the final Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan and deliver Just Transition Plans for Built Environment and Construction, Land Use and Agriculture, and Transport, as well as a site Just Transition Plan for Grangemouth.
- Continue to deliver £50 million of investment in the North East and Moray through the Just Transition Fund to accelerate the region's Just Transition to net zero – with £25 million allocated to the Scottish National Investment Bank for 2023-24, to be invested on a commercial basis and in line with the Bank's Investment Strategy.

Nature

- Publish Scotland's Biodiversity Strategy and first five-year delivery plan and build on the international engagement undertaken in developing the Edinburgh Declaration adopted at COP15.
- Prepare for the introduction of the Natural Environment Bill to Parliament by consulting on the establishment of statutory nature recovery targets, our commitment to protect 30% of Scotland's land and sea for nature by 2030, and modernising National Parks legislation, alongside continuing work to designate a new National Park within this Parliamentary term.
- Continue to protect and restore our natural environment on land and at sea through our commitment to invest £500 million in our natural environment to drive landscape scale change, including through our £65 million Nature Restoration Fund and through new financial support for Nature Networks.

Marine environment

- Enhance the protection of our marine environment, including through progressing implementation of a suite of management measures in Marine Protected Areas, and supporting community-led marine protection.
- Develop a Blue Carbon Action Plan to improve the management, protection and enhancement of Scotland's critical blue carbon environments.

Heating

- Consult on proposals for a Heat in Buildings Bill, supporting our commitments on reducing emissions from housing and buildings, and supporting people to make the necessary changes.
- Launch a refreshed Warmer Homes Scotland scheme providing targeted support for energy efficiency and zero emission heating systems, further boosting our commitment to providing one of the most generous packages of support in the UK.

Circular economy

- Drive a transition to a circular economy through supporting the Circular Economy Bill.
- Work with businesses to develop plans for the delivery of the Deposit Return Scheme from 2025, subject to UK Government legislation, recognising that the UK Government has prevented Scotland's scheme from progressing as agreed by the Scottish Parliament.
- Set out priority actions for our waste and recycling targets by publishing a final Circular Economy and Waste Route Map and deliver the new National Litter and Flytipping Strategy's Year One action plan.

Transport

- Implement the Active Travel Transformation Project to help realise our commitment to £320 million in active travel investment in future budgets and continue the roll out of 20 miles per hour speed limits in built up areas, supporting physical and mental wellbeing as well as safety and emissions reduction.
- Publish the Fair Fares Review on both the cost and availability of bus, rail and ferry services, and introduce a pilot for the removal of ScotRail peak-time fares, beginning in October, to make rail travel more affordable and accessible during the pilot period while helping to identify longer-term steps to reduce car use.

- Lay secondary legislation before the end of this year, to enable bus franchising and partnership options to be developed, providing even more powers to Councils.
- Progress smart, digital and integrated ticketing and payment with operators and authorities and sponsor the new National Smart Ticketing Advisory Board.
- Publish a 20% car kilometre reduction route map, promoting sustainable behaviours when planning a journey, and reducing both our reliance on cars and our transport emissions.
- Progress the dualling of the A9 between Perth and Inverness and take forward the procurement of the Tomatin to Moy project, make improvements to the A96, including dualling Inverness to Nairn and the Nairn Bypass and publish the review of the A96 Dualling Programme, continue to develop a long term solution as well as medium term improvements to the landslip risks at the A83 Rest and Be Thankful, and continue to press the UK Government to fulfil their commitments to contribute to funding improvements to the A75.
- Publish a refreshed Rail Services Decarbonisation Action Plan, as well as electrifying the Glasgow to Barrhead Line, opening East Linton station and re-opening the line to Levenmouth, including new stations at Cameron Bridge and Leven.
- Invest in ferry services to support our island communities and all those who rely on our ferry services, including continuing the construction of six major vessels, make port improvements at Lochmaddy and Uig, progress port enabling works on the Islay routes, plus consult on and complete the Long Term Plan for Vessels and Ports to support our Islands Connectivity Plan.
- Support the operation of Low Emission Zones across our four largest cities by June 2024 to improve air quality and protect health, and continue supporting the growth of zero-emission vehicles on our roads and increasing charger numbers to 6,000 by 2026.



Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands

Mairi Gougeon MSP

Scotland's land and seas are vital to every aspect of our nation's wellbeing. Protecting, nurturing, and restoring these assets and ensuring they sustain our people, businesses, and communities, now and in the future, is my priority. That is why, since becoming Cabinet Secretary, my focus has been on reforming and transforming our policies, support, and activities.

Addressing, mitigating, and adapting to climate change, and protecting and restoring nature – these are challenges that also create opportunities. I will continue our work to grow and support Scotland's rural and blue economies – to make them more sustainable, productive, and prosperous.

Scotland's agriculture, forestry, fishing, and aquaculture sectors are at the heart of many of our communities and they play a vital role in our economy. Combined, they contribute around £2.6 billion a year to the Scottish economy.

Our food and drink industry has been harmed by Brexit, yet it is still Scotland's largest manufacturing sector, with exports worth £8 billion annually. Delivery of the new Scotland Food and Drink strategy will not only help recover lost ground, but set the sector fair for success in the future. The immediate focus of our new Food Security Unit is on developing evidence-based monitoring for supply chain risks, and we are making real progress in being a Good Food Nation.

Our vision for the Blue Economy sets out how we will transform all that we do with our seas and coastal waters – we now need to put that

into action. Everyone has a role to play, not least our fishing and seafood businesses. They recognise more than any of us how important a healthy marine environment is.

We will continue to work to deliver more fishing opportunities and prosperity for Scotland's coastal communities. Our Vision for Sustainable Aquaculture sets out how the sector can contribute to our Blue Economy and net zero ambitions, while being globally recognised as innovative, productive, and sustainable.

Work to transform how we support farming and food production is well underway, with new conditions to protect and restore peatland to apply to basic payments, and conditions to improve business efficiency and cut emissions applying to beef support payments from 2025.

We legislated last year to allow the start date of the Basic Payment Scheme and Greening payments to be brought forward to September 2022, paying out £419 million in the year to August 2023 in support to Scottish farmers and crofters. In the coming year, we will do the same, starting payments in September 2023 to provide farmers and crofters with financial security during the ongoing cost crisis.



We still plant more trees and create more woodland than any other UK nation. To make further progress faster, we are investing up to £1 million to develop skills and boost planting around rivers and streams. We have improved grants for agro-forestry and will make the now publicly owned Glenprosen Estate into an exemplar of forestry and land use.

Protecting and restoring peatland is critical to our climate change ambitions. In 2022-23, we restored around 7,500 hectares of peatland, making further progress towards our 250,000 hectare target.

People and communities are key to sustaining the wellbeing of rural Scotland. This year we increased the Scottish Land Fund, providing up to £11 million to enable more communities to own land, buildings, and other assets in urban and rural areas.

Working closely with the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, we will continue to support rural skills, acting on recommendations from the Land-Based Learning Review and taking account of the wider reforms of the education and skills system that the Scottish Government will be implementing.

We are providing £443,000 of support to Scottish Enterprise to establish a new Agritourism Monitor Farm Programme over 2023-24 and 2024-25, and funded Scottish Agritourism to provide a leadership role to help deliver the Scottish Agritourism Strategy.

We have provided an additional £1 million to help our six island authorities support more island residents and businesses with the cost of living and other challenges of island living, and we invested a further £4 million through the Islands Programme to stimulate economic activity, encourage repopulation, and improve community assets on Scotland's islands.

Our island communities continue to help lead the way in our fight against climate change. The Scottish Government is proud to have launched six Community Climate Change Action Plans as part of the Carbon Neutral Islands project. These will support Yell, Hoy, Barra, Raasay, Islay, and Great Cumbrae to become carbon neutral in a just way. Work is also underway, led by the Deputy First Minister, to progress the Rural Delivery Plan, setting out how all parts of the Scottish Government are delivering for Scotland's rural, coastal, and island communities.

Delivering in the year ahead

In the coming year, I will take forward the following critical activity.

Agriculture, land reform, the rural economy and the islands

- Pay Scottish farmers and crofters £550 million, with payments beginning in September, including a fresh round of Agri-Environment Climate Scheme funding, to support actions to tackle climate change, cut emissions, and restore nature.
- Introduce a Land Reform Bill, including measures to modernise agricultural holdings.
- Create a new rural support framework through the Agriculture Bill and continue to work with stakeholders to develop key elements of that framework, including the whole farm plan, a new approach to advice and support, and enhanced conditional support measures.
- Continue the Agricultural Reform Programme to produce more of our food sustainably, cut carbon emissions and farm with nature, by increasing the uptake of carbon audits, soil testing and biodiversity audits, and funding to improve animal health.
- Develop and consult on proposals to reform crofting law, create new opportunities for new entrants, encourage the active management and use of crofts and common grazings, and support rural population retention through action on non-residency.
- Develop a gender strategy for agriculture and fund practical training opportunities for women, new entrants, and young farmers.
- Develop our approach to future farming activity through engagement with key stakeholders to identify potential opportunities to increase sustainable production and markets for poultry and eggs, venison, and seed potatoes, and with young farmers to start work to design support options for new entrants.

- Support action to address emerging climate issues for land use, with roundtables on water scarcity and on decarbonising rural machinery and equipment.
- Host an international food summit and support the promotion of Scotland's food and drink at home and to wider UK and international markets and audiences.
- Lay out the actions we are taking to extend the learning and good practice from the Carbon Neutral Islands Project to other islands across Scotland, and review and, if necessary, update the National Islands Plan.
- Consult on phasing out cages for gamebirds and laying hens, and publish our response to the consultation on extending the framework for licensing activities involving animals.

Marine

- Pilot a new aquaculture consenting process in two local authority areas to help deliver a more streamlined regime across Scotland, and reduce the risk of escapes from fish farms with a new Technical Standard for Scottish Finfish Aquaculture, helping to realise our recently published Vision for Sustainable Aquaculture.
- Award up to £14 million of grant funding through the Marine Fund Scotland to support projects to deliver improved social, environmental, and economic outcomes in line with our Blue Economy Vision.
- Press the UK Government to honour its commitment to maintain long term funding for maritime and fisheries following Brexit, continuing to push it to take responsibility for the full costs of Brexit for our marine sectors, and to provide a fair and appropriate share of funding to Scotland, above and beyond the £14 million annually (to 2024-25) currently provided for the Marine Fund Scotland.

- Remain an international leader in sustainable fisheries management, protecting fish stocks and the marine environment, by developing new technical and management measures through our Future Catching Policy, by legislating to require Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM) on board all pelagic and scallop dredge vessels fishing in Scottish waters, and by considering responses to our consultation on tracking and monitoring tools for inshore fishing vessels.
- Engage fully in international fisheries negotiations to secure the best possible outcome for Scotland's fishing industry.
- Publish a Science and Innovation Strategy for Scotland's Marine and Freshwater environments that sets out how science and innovation will contribute to the delivery of our Blue Economy ambition and commitments as well as emerging opportunities and challenges.

Environment and forestry

- Implement the recommendations of the Werritty Review to license grouse moor management and muirburn, require training on muirburn, tackle illegal raptor persecution, and ensure management of grouse moors and related activities are undertaken in an environmentally sustainable manner – subject to the passage of the Wildlife Management and Muirburn (Scotland) Bill.
- Explore what more can be done to prevent and manage wildfires.
- Ban snaring through the Wildlife Management and Muirburn (Scotland) Bill.
- Continue to invest through the Forestry Grant Scheme to support woodland creation and sustainable forest management, including supporting specific training and development in forestry skills for front line staff to support woodland creation.
- Further restore and expand our iconic Atlantic rainforest and ancient Caledonian pinewoods, encouraging action and investment to improve their condition and that of other ancient woodlands, planting at least 900 hectares of new trees on Scotland's national forest estate, and set out our plans to make the newly acquired Glenprosen Estate an exemplar of integrated land management.
- Restore 10,700 hectares of degraded peatland and progress action with crofters to support more peatland restoration on crofting land, including the Scottish Ministers' crofting estates, as well as commencing the process to ban the sale of horticultural peat for domestic use.
- Support the planned natural regeneration of the 4,600 hectares surrounding Loch Katrine by Forestry and Land Scotland, increasing biodiversity, amenity and protecting Glasgow's water source for decades to come.
- Encourage responsible private investment in natural capital, publishing proposals for a market framework that strengthens the interim principles we set out in 2022, to help meet our climate change and biodiversity goals, support communities, and align with a just transition.



Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture

Angus Robertson MSP

The people who live in Scotland know what is best for our country, and politicians elected in Scotland are best equipped to take decisions about Scotland's future. This is why we will continue to build the case for an independent Scotland within the EU.

Devolution gives us some protection from Westminster decisions, but the powers of the Scottish Parliament are being eroded. We will always make the case for the protection and enhancement of the powers and responsibilities of the Scottish Parliament – we will always stand up for Scotland.

Our vision of Scotland remains outward-looking: a nation committed to good global citizenship, with a strong, respected voice in the world. We are proud to have opened our arms and our homes to thousands of Ukrainians fleeing conflict. We continue to ensure our international work supports the Scottish Government's domestic policy objectives and projects the values we espouse on the global stage, working closely with partners in Africa in particular.

My team and I have continued to stand up for Scotland, recommending that the Scottish Parliament withhold consent and supporting important amendments to the UK Government's Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Act.

The Scottish Government has a clear democratic mandate to make the case for independence and give the people of Scotland – including the generation of young Scots who were not involved in the debate ten years ago –

the information they need to make an informed choice about Scotland's future. The Building a New Scotland series forms a prospectus for an independent nation, and we have already published papers on critical issues such as the economy, the constitution, and citizenship.

Our paper, Devolution since the Brexit Referendum, sets out in stark terms the impact on devolution, and on the powers and responsibilities of the Scottish Parliament, of key UK Government decisions since the EU referendum.

Scotland's culture is unique, and our brand is known the world over. From our museums and galleries, our historic buildings and cultural heritage, to our local and national festivals and major events, people travel from all over the world to experience what we have to offer. The transformational power of our culture is immense, from making Scotland a more desirable, diverse, and dynamic place to live, to growing our economy and creating highly skilled jobs and successful businesses, and supporting our communities to thrive working with creatives, Local Government and the third sector. Continuing to harness this potential is essential if we are to deliver for the people of Scotland and achieve the Government's key priorities.



Scotland continues to deliver on the world stage, and this summer we welcomed the world to the 2023 UCI Cycling World Championships, the first time 13 Cycling World Championships had been brought together in one mega event. Almost 8,000 athletes participated from over 130 nations. Events held across the country were broadcast to over 120 countries. With the eyes of the world on us, we once again demonstrated Scotland's ability to host major international events. The Championships was a strong example of a range of areas within the Scottish Government working together successfully. Teams in areas as diverse as major events, health, sport, transport, resilience and tourism worked together to help make the event a success and to maximise benefits.

We will continue our major event delivery when Glasgow hosts the World Athletics Indoor Championships in March 2024. We have also continued to invest in Scottish culture and supported our cultural institutions: providing £9.5 million funding for Scotland's flagship Youth Music Initiative this year.

In the international arena, our support for our international development partners has remained steadfast, including providing £1 million to establish a state-of-the-art research laboratory in Zambia to support life-saving research and increase access to vaccines, and creating a ground breaking three-country collaboration in scientific research between universities in Scotland, Malawi and Zambia. We have also supported our humanitarian partners to respond to global crises, delivering funding of £400,000 to Save the Children and the Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund to provide food, shelter, and healthcare for people in Malawi affected by Tropical Storm Freddy. The financial support we have provided to The HALO Trust, a Scottish-based charity, continues to support their work in Ukraine, improving the security and resilience of communities affected by mines and other explosive remnants.

The First Minister is clear that Scotland will always be European at its core. We continue to explore ways in which we can work closely with our fellow Europeans and make Scotland a welcoming place for our friends and neighbours. Our Stay in Scotland campaign continues to support more EU citizens to remain here, helping EU citizens to gain settled status – because Scotland is their home.

Scotland remains an open, connected and outward-looking country with a long and proud history of intellectual, cultural, and economic exchange. Scotland's diaspora and our Scottish connections are an extension of Scotland – our living bridge with people, organisations, and communities around the world. We have secured cross-party support from the Scottish Parliament for the enhanced approach to engagement with Scotland's diaspora set out in our new Scottish Connections Framework.

Delivering in the year ahead

In the coming year, I will take forward the following critical activity.

Independence and devolution

- Defend the powers and responsibilities of the Scottish Parliament and continue to build the case for an independent Scotland within the EU, including through the Building a New Scotland prospectus series.

Culture and major events

- Publish, and begin implementing our Culture Strategy Action Plan Refresh, to support the recovery and renewal of the culture sector with a focus on empowering individuals and communities to further develop their own cultural activity, supporting them to do so by identifying and removing barriers to access, championing the economic impact of culture, in particular within the context of community wealth building and creative placemaking, and developing a long term strategic approach to skills and careers in the sector.
- Renew our focus on engaging across government to harness the transformational power of culture as it contributes to the achievement of key policy priorities – prioritising working across both health and education portfolios to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes through culture while continuing to work across government to agree future areas for priority engagement.

- Publish our International Culture Strategy to support the culture sector's international ambitions, building on existing strengths, and ensure that international engagement plays a key role in sectoral recovery and future development.
- Enhance Scotland's reputation as the perfect stage for events by concluding the National Events Strategy review and supporting a pipeline of strong hosting opportunities such as the World Athletics Indoor Championships and the joint UK and Ireland bid to host the 2028 UEFA European Football Championships.

International

- Be a global champion in tackling non-communicable diseases – the world's leading cause of death – by developing new programmes with Malawi, Zambia and Rwanda to build stronger health systems for those in the Global South, developed by those in the Global South.
- Together with our partner countries, become global leaders and champions for change by developing new programmes with Malawi, Zambia, Rwanda and Pakistan to support inclusive education, with a focus on improving access to education for the most marginalised – particularly girls and learners with additional support needs.
- Develop new programmes to support equalities, including codeveloping through a participatory approach a new Women and Girls Fund to provide funding to support women and girls in Malawi, Zambia and Rwanda, with the advancement of gender equality as a principal objective.
- Launch a diaspora recognition award, marking the achievements of our diaspora, designed in consultation with diaspora members, and pilot a Scottish Connections Fund to support the aims of our new Scottish Connections Framework.

- Support sustainable economic growth, highlighting Scotland’s offshore wind and green hydrogen potential and investment opportunities – showcasing these at the Arctic Assembly in Reykjavik in October and at COP28 in Dubai in November 2023.

EU alignment and engagement

- Press for the UK’s urgent return to the Horizon Europe research programme by making the strongest possible case to the UK Government, enumerating the full range of benefits that would accrue to Scotland and the UK as a whole, and by ensuring that academic and research voices in Scotland, working with their UK and international counterparts, articulate clearly the opportunities and benefits that a return to Horizon Europe would bring.
- Press the UK Government to improve the EU/UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement, working with stakeholders to build a coalition in support of Scottish interests and to prepare the ground for the 2025 review of the Agreement.
- Impact the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement by presenting to the UK Government the compelling arguments for easements of trading conditions for Scottish exporters of food and drink products, a more effective approach for electricity trading, an expansion of sectors included in the mutual recognition of professional qualifications, a better solution for touring creative professionals, and for the UK to rejoin the Erasmus+ initiative.
- Align, where possible and meaningful, with the vital safeguards and high standards Scotland benefitted from as part of the European Union, by delivering our EU alignment policy, by challenging where we can, given our limited powers, attempts by the UK Government to use the Retained EU Law Act to legislate for lower standards, and by providing the Scottish Parliament with a full picture of progress.



Minister for Zero Carbon Buildings, Active Travel and Tenants' Rights

Patrick Harvie MSP



Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity

Lorna Slater MSP

Greener, Fairer Scotland

The Bute House Agreement is about doing politics differently, working together to build a better Scotland and to rise to the challenges of the climate and nature emergencies.

As Green Ministers we are proud of the benefits that this collaborative approach to politics and governance is bringing to the people of Scotland. After two years of the Bute House Agreement those benefits are increasingly clear. Over 650,000 young people in Scotland are already enjoying free bus travel. Households are benefiting from one of the most generous grants in the UK to improve their homes and cut their emissions. And our record investment in cycling and walking infrastructure, recycling services, and restoring our natural environment is improving communities and lives across Scotland.

The Agreement also stands as a contrast to the polarised and often toxic politics seen elsewhere; two parties working together where they share common ground while respecting their differences, providing stable government and taking forward the progressive policies that are the hallmark of responsible government.

The First Minister's Policy Prospectus in April cemented a shared policy programme for this parliamentary term that is led by five key priorities:

- Ensure that Scotland leads the way in tackling the climate emergency – in how we heat our homes, travel day-to-day and use our land.
- Embed fairness in how workplaces are managed, how the housing market works, and in how some of the most marginalised people in our society are treated.
- Reverse decades of damage to the natural world on land and sea by helping nature fight back.
- Reshape the way decisions are made – setting out a new relationship with Local Government and offering new opportunities for communities to control their own futures.
- Build an economy which harnesses the enormous potential which Scotland has in natural resources, skills and talents.



These priorities and the policies within the shared policy programme run throughout this Programme for Government and, within our own portfolios, we will continue to lead on the delivery of a wide range of key policies, including:

- Accelerate the transition towards a circular economy through the Circular Economy Bill and Recycling Improvement Fund, which will improve recycling and reuse services across Scotland.
- Publish a new biodiversity strategy and delivery plan, and support Scotland's precious wildlife and habitats through our Nature Restoration Fund.
- Consult on draft proposals for a Heat in Buildings Bill to accelerate the transition to zero carbon homes as a significant part of a new draft climate plan.
- Create more opportunities to acquire the green skills that our economy and workers need to thrive and transition to net zero, supported by an updated Climate Emergency Skills Action Plan.
- Build on our commitment for a New Deal for Tenants, with a new Housing Bill to continue reform of the rented sector and introduce long term rent controls.

As Green Ministers we will also work with colleagues across government and with our wider Green MSP group on key issues that cut across this Programme for Government. Critically, this includes the development of the forthcoming draft climate plan, our work to tackle poverty and inequality, and continuing to outline the case for Scottish independence through the Building a New Scotland prospectus series. It also includes many other policy priorities this government is taking forward: safer access to abortion services, action on the blight of single-use vapes, supporting community-led rural housing, continuing to deliver a progressive tax system, further extending free school meals and addressing costs of the school day, piloting the removal of peak-time fares on the railways, restoring ancient and native woodlands, defending the rights of marginalised people facing hate and discrimination, and many of the other priorities running through this document.

The Bute House Agreement and this Programme for Government demonstrate the value of two parties working together: showing leadership on climate and nature, building a fairer Scotland, and demonstrating that grown-up, collaborative politics is where government should be.

Outcomes and Equalities

Scotland's National Performance Framework (NPF) is our wellbeing framework. The eleven National Outcomes set out a vision of what wellbeing means for the people of Scotland and enable everyone to work towards these shared goals. Our commitment to the three missions of equality, opportunity and community, as laid out in the recent Policy Prospectus, will contribute towards all the National Outcomes, taking us towards a country that prioritises wellbeing for all.

A review of the National Outcomes is already underway. This is our opportunity to ensure that the outcomes continue to reflect what matters most to communities across Scotland, and will be informed by the consultation and engagement that has taken place with individuals and organisations. The result of this review will be laid before Parliament in early 2024.

We are also committed to continually improving the way the NPF is used, across government and more widely. We will continue to explore the development of legislative proposals on a wellbeing and sustainable development Bill, to support greater implementation of the NPF, and to ensure the interests of future generations are taken into account in decisions made today.

We are committed to ensuring Scotland remains a global leader in equality, inclusion and human rights: a country with strong, inclusive communities where everyone enjoys realisation of their fundamental human rights, where people feel connected, have a sense of belonging and community, and feel valued for their contribution to society.

While we have made progress, inequality persists. This highlights the need to tackle structural and systemic barriers to equality. We recognise that disadvantage is experienced in groups beyond those defined under protected characteristics and, critically, that the intersection of forms of disadvantage compounds structural inequality. We continue to take action to embed equality and human rights into the daily activity of government and the wider public sector, from strategic decision making to the delivery of services.

We are also taking specific steps to introduce a Human Rights Bill and to invite the Scottish Parliament to bring back the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill for Reconsideration Stage, to deliver legislation that protects and enhances a fuller range of human rights within the limits of devolved competence – improving the lives of those most marginalised and vulnerable in our society.

We are taking forward action to address discrimination and disadvantage. This includes preventing hate crime, advancing LGBTI+ equality through the Non-Binary Equality Action Plan, and consulting on legislative proposals to end conversion practices. We are working collaboratively to improve the lives of disabled people, recognising the systemic barriers they face. Scotland continues to welcome and support those fleeing war and persecution. We are addressing intersectional gender inequality, including tackling violence against women and girls, and continuing our implementation of the recommendations of the First Minister's National Advisory Council on Women and Girls. We will invest in a new Anti-Racism Observatory to provide oversight and support for anti-racism approaches, so that we can eradicate racism in Scotland.

The Legislative Programme 2023-24

The Scottish Government intends to introduce 14 Bills over the course of the parliamentary year, as set out below. In addition, we will support Gillian Mackay MSP to introduce her proposed Abortion Services (Safe Access Zones) (Scotland) Bill. We intend to bring back the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill (“the UNCRC Bill”) for Reconsideration Stage, and support Mark Ruskell MSP in doing the same for the European Charter of Local Self-Government (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill. We will also continue to develop other proposals for legislative change, including in relation to Heat in Buildings and Ending Conversion Practices.

Bills for introduction 2023-24

- Agriculture
- Budget (No. 3)
- Cladding Remediation
- Education
- Electoral Reform
- Gender Representation on Public Boards Remedial Action
- Housing
- Human Rights
- Judicial Factors
- Land Reform
- Misogyny
- Scottish Aggregates Tax
- Scottish Languages
- Social Security (Amendment)

Scottish Government Bills in Parliament

- Bankruptcy and Diligence
- Children (Care and Justice)
- Circular Economy
- National Care Service
- Patient Safety Commissioner for Scotland
- Police (Ethics, Conduct and Scrutiny)
- Regulation of Legal Services
- Trusts and Succession
- Victims, Witnesses, and Justice Reform
- Visitor Levy
- Wildlife Management and Muirburn

Bills passed this Session

- Bail and Release from Custody
- Budget
- Budget (No. 2)
- Carer's Allowance Supplement
- Charities (Regulation and Administration)
- Coronavirus (Discretionary Compensation for Self-isolation)
- Coronavirus (Extension and Expiry)
- Coronavirus (Recovery and Reform)
- Cost of Living (Tenant Protection)
- Fireworks and Pyrotechnic Articles
- Gender Recognition Reform
- Good Food Nation
- Hunting with Dogs
- Moveable Transactions
- Miners' Strike (Pardons)
- Non-Domestic Rates (Coronavirus)
- Scottish Local Government Elections (Candidacy Rights of Foreign Nationals)
- Transvaginal Mesh Removal (Cost Reimbursement)

Summary of Scottish Government Bills for introduction

Agriculture

The Bill will provide powers to deliver the Scottish Government's Vision for Agriculture that will replace current common agricultural policy schemes through an adaptive support framework that focuses on high quality food production, climate mitigation and adaptation, nature protection and restoration, and wider rural development.

Budget (No. 3)

The annual Budget Bill provides parliamentary approval for the Scottish Government's spending plans, allocates resources to strategic objectives and supports progress towards the vision of a more successful country.

Cladding Remediation

The Bill will enable the Scottish Government to undertake urgent measures to remediate a building with unsafe cladding materials that present a risk to life.

Education

The Bill will provide for the establishment of a new public body responsible for qualifications in Scotland and the creation of an independent education inspectorate.

Electoral Reform

The Bill will make improvements to the law in relation to Scottish Parliament and Local Government elections, informed by our recent consultation exercise which sought views on the expansion of candidacy rights, protecting candidates and campaigners from intimidation, and improving administrative arrangements for elections.

Gender Representation on Public Boards Remedial Action

The Bill will remove the definition of “woman” from section 2 of the Gender Representation on Public Boards (Scotland) Act 2018. This will update the statute book following a reclaiming motion of a judicial review decision on the 2018 Act, which meant that a wider definition of “woman” in that Act no longer has legal effect.

Housing

The Bill will help to deliver our New Deal for Tenants and some other aspects of Housing to 2040 by creating powers for the introduction of longer-term rent controls. The Bill will also create new tenants’ rights and introduce new duties aimed at the prevention of homelessness.

Human Rights

The Bill will incorporate into Scots law international economic, social and cultural rights, and rights relating to women, disabled people and people who experience racism, as well as recognise the right to a healthy environment, within the limits of devolved competence.

Judicial Factors

The third Scottish Law Commission Bill this session will implement the Commission’s recommendations to update the law around the appointment and supervision of judicial factors and put in place a modern and comprehensive regime.

Land Reform

The Bill will improve transparency of land ownership, further empower communities, and help ensure that large-scale landholdings are delivering in the public interest. It will also modernise tenant farming and small landholding legislation.

Misogyny

The Bill will implement the recommendations of the Working Group chaired by Baroness Helena Kennedy to create new offences related to misogynistic conduct, providing Police Scotland with new powers to hold to account perpetrators of misogynistic behaviours which can denigrate women and reinforce barriers to an equal society.

Scottish Aggregates Tax

The Bill will deliver on powers devolved in the Scotland Act 2016, by setting out the key arrangements for a devolved tax on the commercial exploitation of aggregates in Scotland.

Scottish Languages

The Bill will provide legal recognition for Gaelic and Scots, strengthen requirements for provision of Gaelic Medium Education, introduce measures to provide further protection for Gaelic within communities, and introduce provision to strengthen support for Scots.

Social Security (Amendment)

The Bill will enhance the Scottish system of social security in line with the Scottish Social Security Principles, including enabling the Scottish Government to make recoveries of devolved social security from compensation awards where a third party’s fault is the reason for the social security payments.



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