

An Leas-phrìomh Mhinistear agus Ath-shlànachadh  
Cobhid  
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid  
Recovery  
John Swinney MSP



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8 February 2023

Dear Convener,

### **Economy and Fair Work Committee – follow-up to evidence session**

During our discussion at the Committee's evidence session on 18 January, in relation to the draft Scottish Budget 2023-24 and the published delivery plans for the National Strategy for Economic Transformation (NSET), I undertook to provide further information in response to some of the questions raised by Committee members. This information is provided below.

#### Women in Business

The Scottish Government recognises the longstanding and persistent gender gap in entrepreneurship and we are determined to address that gap. We will prioritise available resources on the measures likely to have the greatest impact in closing that gap, and the review being conducted by Ana Stewart is intended to help us determine those priorities.

In the Programme for Government 2022-23, *A Stronger and More Resilient Scotland*, we committed to respond quickly to the review's recommendations. The whole-system review will emphasise the need for action to tackle not only the immediate barriers facing women in entrepreneurship, but also the root causes of under-participation. Many of those will require a longer-term approach as they seek to address wider societal biases. No decisions on funding or on future mechanisms to support women in entrepreneurship have yet been taken as we await the outcome of the review.

With regard to Michelle Thomson MSP's questions concerning gender disaggregated data, while not wishing to pre-empt Ana Stewart's review, we nevertheless recognise the importance of good data to understanding, tackling and, importantly, measuring the effectiveness of solutions to the gender gap in entrepreneurship and the performance of publicly funded business support services. We will work with our business support partners to achieve this.

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## Transparency around business interests

On 11 January 2023, the Chief Entrepreneur, Mark Logan, gave evidence to the Committee. On that occasion, Graham Simpson MSP asked him about his involvement in some other companies, giving the example of TravelNest, which Mr Simpson pointed out has received money from the Scottish Government. In response to Mr Simpson's question about whether there is a potential conflict of interests, Professor Logan stated:

*"There is a potential conflict of interests there, which is why I have done two things. First, I have been very careful not to involve myself in those decisions. Secondly, I have resigned the non-executive position to ensure that there is no conflict."*

I can assure the Committee that the basis for Professor Logan's employment as Chief Entrepreneur is a formally binding contract for the provision of services in compliance with regulations and containing the usual necessary safeguards.

## NSET Delivery Board minutes and annual report

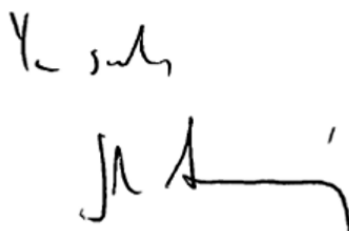
The NSET Delivery Board has met four times since it was established in May 2022. The minutes from these meetings will be placed on the Board's webpage<sup>1</sup> by the end of the week.

The strategy commits to publish an annual progress report from the NSET Delivery Board. This report will be produced to inform the Board's meeting in May 2023, marking a year since the Board was announced, and it will be published on the Board's webpage.

## First Minister's Investor Panel

The First Minister's Investor Panel, which was a commitment in NSET, met for the first time on 12 December 2022. The Panel's Terms of Reference have been published on the Scottish Government website, alongside minutes of the first meeting.<sup>2</sup>

I hope you find this information helpful, and I would be happy to respond to any further questions the Committee might have.



**JOHN SWINNEY**

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<sup>1</sup> [National Strategy for Economic Transformation Delivery Board - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/nset-delivery-board/)

<sup>2</sup> [Net zero: Investor Panel - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/net-zero-investor-panel/)

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