



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee

Kate Forbes MSP
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Gaelic
Scottish Government

06 November 2024

Dear Deputy First Minister,

National Performance Framework: Inquiry into proposed National Outcomes

The National Outcomes form part of the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework (NPF). The NPF sets out the Scottish Government's "overarching vision for collective wellbeing" in Scotland.

The Scottish Government must review the National Outcomes every 5 years and, once completed, consult the Scottish Parliament. The Finance and Public Administration Committee is leading on the Scottish Parliament's scrutiny of the proposed national outcomes, with input from subject Committees.

A number of the outcomes in the NPF are relevant to the Net Zero, Energy and Transport (NZET) Committee's remit, but those of greatest significance are the Environment outcome and the new Climate Action outcome.

Environment Outcome

The proposed Environment Outcome is:

"We actively protect, restore, enhance and enjoy our natural environment"

The definition of this Outcome has been revised to reflect the need to proactively restore the natural environment. The Committee agrees that there is an urgent need for restoration of the natural environment so supports this intention.

However, we highlight the concern raised by Historic Environment Scotland over the removal of a reference to the built environment and heritage. They emphasise that the historic environment "is an important part of the environment as a whole" so preserving this should be a component of the overall environmental strategy.

Other respondents to the consultation suggested that this outcome should include a comprehensive approach to water quality, biodiversity conservation, pollution control, and sustainable land use. The importance of community involvement in

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environmental decision-making, environmental education and promoting eco-friendly practices were also raised by respondents.

The Committee recommends that the Scottish Government consider these concerns and suggestions and how these can be addressed in the final NPF and the implementation plan.

The Government's consultation document sets out that the new outcome on Climate Action has been proposed to emphasise "the distinct yet interconnected climate and biodiversity crises". Having a new outcome on Climate Action was intended to allow the Environment outcome to focus more strongly on the natural environment and biodiversity in response to evidence that emphasised the urgency of the biodiversity crisis.

The Committee welcomes this recognition of the importance of the natural environment and biodiversity. However, as the Committee has previously highlighted in its [feedback on the draft biodiversity delivery plan](#), the ambitious rhetoric from the Government about tackling biodiversity loss has too often not produced real change. It is vital that the Government's action matches the ambition that is set out in the NPF.

Climate Action Outcome

The proposed new Climate Action outcome is:

"We live sustainably, achieve a just transition to net zero and build Scotland's resilience to climate change."

The consultation document states that this has been added to the NPF to better align climate policy with the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals and address the urgency and scale of the climate crisis.

The Committee is supportive of the intention behind adding this outcome but emphasises, as we have done before, the importance of backing up ambition with action – and, in particular, ensuring that adequate funding is provided to achieve this.

While the majority of the respondents to the Finance and Public Administration Committee's call for views were supportive of the inclusion of the new outcome on climate action, some made additional observations, which may be of help to the Scottish Government in refining the wording of the outcomes and developing the NPF. Respondents highlighted:

- The importance of embedding a global perspective on climate justice across all national outcomes, ensuring that Scotland's actions are locally beneficial and globally responsible.

- The need to incorporate a strong human rights perspective that emphasises the need for climate justice, ensuring protections for vulnerable populations and promoting education and public participation in environmental matters.
- That climate actions must be inclusive and accessible to all citizens. This aligns with the principle that a just transition must involve all segments of society.
- That a 'just transition' requires support for vulnerable and low-income households.
- That sufficient funding must be allocated to supporting local authorities in enhancing climate resilience, meeting sustainability commitments, and achieving a just transition to net zero.
- The need to actively support industry-wide skills development, policy reform, and recruitment to meet the challenges of decarbonising the built environment.
- The need to acknowledge the roles of both consumers and businesses in the climate action outcome and provide clear guidance on how they can contribute to achieving the broader objectives.

The Committee recommends that consideration is given to each of these points and how these can be reflected in the final NPF, the extended definition and the implementation plan, once published.

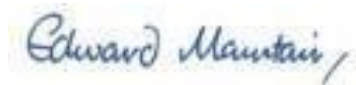
Respondents to the call for views also emphasised the importance of aligning climate action with other National Outcomes and integrating sustainability into all aspects of policymaking.

This aligns with the view we have expressed in our pre-budget scrutiny that collaboration and cohesion across ministerial portfolios to support meeting climate change targets is vital. This applies equally to achieving the national outcomes under the NPF. We consider that there is room to improve this cross-portfolio working on climate change.

In conclusion, the Committee is broadly supportive of the proposed national outcomes, as far as these relate to matters in our remit. However, we emphasise that these outcomes are only as good as the work undertaken to achieve them, and reiterate that ambition must be backed by action.

I am copying this letter to the Acting Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero and Energy and the Convener of the Finance and Public Administration Committee.

Yours sincerely,



Edward Mountain MSP

Convener

Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee