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Richard Leonard MSP
Convener
Public Audit Committee
The Scottish Parliament
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9 March 2026

Dear Richard,

Digital Inclusion

I am writing to you in your role as convener of the Public Audit Committee to provide an update on work progressing on Digital Inclusion, and the intention to publish a Digital Inclusion Action Plan later this year, post-election.

Digital inclusion is one of the core priorities featured in the joint Scottish Government and Local Government *Digital Strategy for Scotland* (published November 2025). The Strategy articulates a shared commitment to tackling the causes of digital exclusion at root. Exclusion can be multi-faceted, requiring a range of tailored interventions. This is complex terrain, and as highlighted in the Audit Scotland report “*Tackling Digital Exclusion*” an integrated, cross-sectoral approach is necessary.

The Scottish Government has therefore been working closely with our partners, including local government, the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO), and the Digital Inclusion Alliance (DIA) to co-ordinate our activity and align our resources to optimise benefit. This is a significant paradigm shift.

Establishing the Digital Inclusion Alliance demonstrates the Scottish Government’s commitment to tackling digital exclusion holistically and innovatively. The DIA is well placed to play a convening role, bringing in a range of players, including the private sector, where appropriate, to create better integration and deepen our collective understanding of digital exclusion. Part of the DIA’s remit will be to facilitate the sharing of learning, tools, and good practice, across the public sector. Having this central library of resources available to all will be a significant advance in how we tackle digital exclusion and enable evolving improvement.

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The appointment of Simon Hewitt as Chair of the Digital Inclusion Alliance, is welcomed. Mr Hewitt will lead the Alliance's cross-sector work to address the structural drivers of digital exclusion.

The Scottish Government has also been working to further develop our evidence base and commissioned the University of Liverpool and the Universities of Loughborough, Glasgow, and Birmingham to undertake research into the Minimum Digital Living Standard (MDLS).

The Interim Report and Phase 2 Reports were published in spring and summer last year respectively. The reports provide a timely and valuable foundation for defining what people in Scotland need to participate meaningfully in an increasingly digital society. The findings in these reports will assist in shaping future work and we encourage the private sector and third sector to familiarise themselves with these findings to inform future policies and interventions. The evidence presented in the reports will inform our work to develop long-term solutions to digital exclusion.

A Digital Inclusion Action Plan, will be published later this year, after the Scottish Parliamentary election in May. It will set out in more detail how we will deliver the ambitions articulated in the Digital Strategy for Scotland (published in November 2025).

Sincerely

RICHARD LOCHHEAD

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