

## **Scottish Parliament Social Justice and Social Security Committee**

### **Wellbeing and Sustainable Development (Scotland) Bill**

#### **Written submission by the Parliamentary Engagement Working Group of Quakers**

##### **Background**

Quakers in Scotland welcome this opportunity to express our support for the principles of the proposed WSD Bill and encourage the Committee to consider how it can be strengthened further. Our faith tradition has long recognised that effective governance must consider the welfare of future generations, and this Bill provides a crucial opportunity for the Scottish Government to embed these principles systematically across all legislation and policy-making.

##### **Strategic case for legislative action**

The current climate emergency and widening social inequalities demand systematic policy coordination that transcends traditional departmental boundaries. There is an urgent need for decision-making frameworks that prioritise long-term sustainability over short-term economic indicators, with impact considered at both Scottish and international levels.

We refer to the [research report by Scotland's International Development Alliance](#) which demonstrates how the proposed approach ensures Scotland makes a positive contribution to people and the environment globally. Our actions here directly impact communities elsewhere, through our emissions, procurement and supply chain decisions, and initiatives supporting the global south in climate mitigation and adaptation.

The Bill presents Scotland with a significant opportunity to establish world-leading governance structures that embed intergenerational responsibility into all public policy. This approach delivers measurable benefits: enhanced policy coherence, improved resource allocation efficiency, and stronger democratic accountability. These outcomes serve both current constituents and future generations while positioning Scotland as an international leader in sustainable governance.

##### **Duty to have 'due regard'**

To achieve these goals, we must strengthen the Bill's current proposal which is to give public bodies a duty to 'have due regard for the need to promote' wellbeing and sustainable development. The draft duty is

inadequate to give proper effect to the aims of the Bill. Instead, there needs to be a requirement to make decisions that will *deliver* wellbeing and sustainable development. This requirement must apply to both the Scottish Government itself, and to all public bodies accountable to the Scottish Government. The requirement should also be applied to any third sector organisations and private companies procured to deliver services by or on behalf of the Government, its agencies and local authorities.

We support the definition proposed by Scotland's International Development Alliance, to rephrase the existing National Outcomes duty so that public authorities are required to:

*“promote and deliver sustainable development while protecting the wellbeing of current and future generations, ensuring that they take all reasonable steps to support the realisation of the national outcomes, minimise trade-offs, and resolve policy conflicts in a way that does not undermine sustainable development or the wellbeing of current and future generations.”*

### **Definition of ‘sustainable development’**

We believe that the current definition drafted in section 2 is too narrow and misses several important aspects, notably any reference to environmental limits. We support the enhanced definition suggested by Stop Climate Chaos Scotland and Scotland's International Development Alliance:

*“the development of human societies based on **fair shares of planetary boundaries**, and which **equitably support the capability of present and future generations across the world to meet their needs.**”*

This formulation makes explicit that sustainable development requires recognition of planetary boundaries and equity principles. The most significant planetary boundaries, of course, relate to climate change and biodiversity loss – without securing emissions reductions and nature restoration, no long-term economy or society can survive.

### **Future Generations Commissioner**

We support the principle of establishing a Commissioner for Future Generations, to address the current gap that exists in relation to the absence of independent advice and scrutiny on the issue of sustainable development. This institution would provide essential accountability mechanisms while offering Parliament enhanced capacity for evidence-based oversight. There are potential opportunities for combining offices

in light of the recent Scottish Parliament review recommending a moratorium on the creation of new Commissioner roles. For example, the current Commissioner for Children and Young People's role might be integrated into the new position, creating operational efficiencies while expanding scope and impact.

## **Conclusion**

This legislation represents a practical pathway toward the systemic change our current challenges demand. We urge the Committee to support a robust Bill that includes strong statutory duties, comprehensive scope, and independent oversight mechanisms. The moral imperative to consider future generations is a political and economic necessity that this Bill can effectively address, offering Scotland the opportunity to demonstrate that principled governance and practical effectiveness are mutually reinforcing.