Local Government and Communities Committee

Consultation of the Scottish Parliament on the Scottish Government’s Revised National Outcomes

Submission from Philip Revell

I have belatedly been alerted to your committee’s consideration of the proposed, revised national outcomes.

I welcome the attempt to align these outcomes with the Sustainable Development Goals and would commend the process that has produced the draft new outcomes. However, I would like to express my view that the wording of the proposed new overarching ‘Our Purpose’ needs to be rethought if it is not to hinder the achievement of the individual outcomes.

The document laid before Parliament states that: “….. the Purpose has been slightly rephrased to reflect the commitment to an ‘inclusive’ economy and to balance this alongside our overarching aim to improve the ‘wellbeing’ of all Scotland’s people. ……..

To/New
To focus on creating a more successful country with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish through increased wellbeing, and sustainable and inclusive economic growth”

As a general point, the proposed new ‘Our Purpose’ wording continues to confuse and conflate ends and means. It makes no sense to include the means by which the purpose will be met within the statement of purpose itself. To do so ties the Government to attempting to achieve the purpose by means that may become outdated over time – so creating the perverse situation in which the Government is tied to using means that may actually work against achieving the purpose.

Whatever one’s view of the practicality of endless growth on a finite planet, there is a growing body of evidence that (in a developed economy such as Scotland) GDP is a very poor proxy for wellbeing. In fact, evidence suggests that, overall, increasing GDP is driving increasing inequality and a reduction in wellbeing. *

I very much welcome the introduction of ‘wellbeing’ into the new statement of purpose. However, if ‘wellbeing’ is indeed the overarching aim, as stated in the quote highlighted above, then I suggest that the new ‘Our Purpose’ would be better reworded as follows:

To focus on creating a sustainable and inclusive Scotland with opportunities for all to flourish and enhance their wellbeing.

*See for example:
