

Local Government and Communities Committee

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

Submission from the National Trust for Scotland

Introduction

The National Trust for Scotland welcomes the revision of the National Performance Framework. We support the principle of the NPF, believing it can lead to more joined-up governance, and consider that the proposed revisions are generally positive.

In particular, we welcome the addition of culture as a National Outcome. From our own work, and from the discussions at stakeholder groups, culture comes through as uniting communities and improving our quality of life. It is a worthy addition to the kind of Scotland we would like to see.

We do think that the draft NPF could be improved at the margin, particularly in better connecting the Outcomes to the underlying targets, and we make some suggestions below on developing these.

Outcomes – suggested improvements

We have a globally competitive, entrepreneurial and sustainable economy

Although the draft takes the UN Sustainable Development Goals as its foundation, the Outcomes themselves appear not to make any specific reference to “sustainable development” itself. It could be included under this Outcome, and in any preamble. The reference to a more sustainable economy could be further strengthened by referring to resource usage, and the value of our natural capital e.g.

“Sustainable development is at the heart of our society, and economic growth is not achieved at the expense of our social interests or those of the environment. In growing our economy, we will seek to reduce our resource and energy usage, and maintain and enhance our stocks of natural capital.”

We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe

The UN Sustainable Development Goals have a strong emphasis on public participation and on integration. We would suggest adding in specific reference to these:

“We value excellent and innovative design and are committed to sustainable planning and transport, delivered through integrated and participatory processes.”

The focus also appears to be on communities of place, while many community actions (e.g. health, development, regeneration, recreation, spirituality) are delivered through communities of interest coming together.

“We are encouraged to volunteer, take responsibility for the places we value, and engage with decisions affecting our places.”

We are well educated, skilled and able to contribute to society

The Sustainable Development Goals in relation to education and learning stress the importance of learning about sustainable development, and also culture (e.g. “By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development.”¹)

We think the Outcome definition should therefore reference the outcomes sought from education and learning. For the Trust, at least, there are specifically the skills needed to maintain our heritage.

We value, enjoy, protect and enhance our environment

We are pleased that Scotland’s landscapes are referenced here, although we would not use the term “wilderness”, preferring “wild land”, and reflecting the qualities of tranquillity and naturalness that people enjoy. Possibly:

“We see our natural, cultural and scenic landscapes as essential to our identity and way of life.”

This Outcome, and its supporting indicators, also covers the historic environment, and we would recommend that specific reference be made to this, such as:

“We take a bold approach to protecting our natural assets and cultural heritage.”
[alternatively *“natural assets and historic environment.”*]

The Sustainable Development Goals incorporate ecosystem services as a way of promoting sustainable land use, including the target that: “By 2020, integrate ecosystem and biodiversity values into national and local planning, development processes, poverty reduction strategies and accounts.”² We would therefore suggest:

“We incorporate ecosystem services into our planning, enabling us to live in clean and unpolluted environments, aspiring to be the greenest country in the world.”

Finally, this outcome will also cover the marine environment, reflected in the

¹ UN Sustainable Development Goals, Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning

² UN Sustainable Development Goals, Goal 15: Life on land

proposed indicators, and we would recommend this is referenced in the Outcome, e.g.:

“Our marine environment is mapped, understood and sustainably developed.”

Specific indicators

The proposed indicators are generally good, particularly around the retention of measures of the health of the natural environment and new additions to cover culture. Our specific suggestions are:

We are open, connected and make a positive contribution internationally – this could be augmented with an indicator for visitors to Scotland. Data is already available to inform this.

We value, enjoy, protect and enhance our environment – the recently updated indicator for the historic environment is the condition of pre-1919 buildings, and we would prefer to see this retained.

We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe – volunteering is at the heart of community activity, and we would like to see a national indicator for this, which could be drawn from the Scottish Household Survey.

Incorporation of Sustainable Development Goals

As noted above, for Scotland to meet its Sustainable Development Goals, there is a specific target to achieve shortly:

“By 2020, integrate ecosystem and biodiversity values into national and local planning, development processes, poverty reduction strategies and accounts.”³

There is an opportunity to meet this target, in part, by incorporating ecosystem services into the current planning bill before the Scottish Parliament, but to fully meet the SDG aspirations these should be incorporated in the National Performance Framework.

³ <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/biodiversity/>