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## Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee

# Proposed Good Food Nation Plan: Scrutiny by the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee



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# Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Committee scrutiny of the Plan</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Local authorities' role</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Summary of evidence</b>	<b>6</b>
Timescales for implementation	7
Local authority resources	9
Collaboration	10
Planning and licensing functions	11
Procurement	12
Measuring impact	13
Role of the Scottish Food Commission	15
Allotments and community growing	16
<b>Summary of recommendations</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Annexe A: Extracts from Committee minutes</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Annexe B: Evidence</b>	<b>23</b>

# Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee

To consider and report on matters relating to local government and planning falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government, matters within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Housing, with the exception of matters related to homelessness and rough sleeping, fuel poverty, and welfare and debt advice services; and matters relating to local government boundaries, local governance review and democratic renewal.



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# Introduction

1. Under the [Good Food Nation \(Scotland\) Act 2022](#) (the '2022 Act') Scottish Ministers are required to produce a national Good Food Nation Plan (the 'Plan') which sets out its goals for food policy and how it intends to achieve them. The proposed national [Good Food Nation Plan](#) was laid by the Scottish Government before the Scottish Parliament on 27 June 2025 for consideration prior to publishing the final version.
2. The Scottish Government's vision is for Scotland to be a "Good Food Nation, where people from every walk of life take pride and pleasure in, and benefit from, the food they produce, buy, cook, serve, and eat each day".<sup>1</sup>
3. The Plan establishes six overarching outcomes:
  - Outcome 1: The food environment in Scotland enables people to eat well. Everyone benefits from reliable and dignified access to safe, nutritious, affordable, enjoyable, sustainable and age-appropriate food.
  - Outcome 2: Scotland's food system is sustainable and contributes to a flourishing natural environment on our land and in our waters. It supports our net zero and climate adaptation ambitions and plays an important role in maintaining and improving animal health and welfare and in restoring and regenerating biodiversity.
  - Outcome 3: Scotland's food environment and wider food system enables and promotes a physically and mentally healthy population. This leads to the prevention of, and a reduction in, diet-related conditions.
  - Outcome 4: Our food and drink sector is prosperous, diverse, innovative, and vital to national and local economic and social wellbeing. It is key to making Scotland food secure and food resilient, and creates and sustains jobs and businesses underpinned by fair work standards throughout food supply chains.
  - Outcome 5: People and communities are empowered to participate in, and shape, their food system. Scotland has a thriving food culture with a population who are educated about good and sustainable food.
  - Outcome 6: Decisions we make in Scotland contribute positively to local and global food systems transformation. Scotland actively engages in learning and exchanging knowledge and best practice internationally.
4. The Scottish Government is required under the Act to lay the proposed national plan "...before the Scottish Parliament for a period of 60 days, of which no fewer than 30 days must be days on which the Parliament is neither dissolved nor in recess". During this period, before finalising the plan, Scottish Ministers are required to have regard to:
  - “(i) any representations about the proposed plan that are made to them,
  - (ii) any resolution relating to the proposed plan passed by the Parliament, and

(iii) any report relating to the draft plan published by any committee of the Parliament for the time being appointed by virtue of the standing orders.”

# Committee scrutiny of the Plan

5. The [2022 Act](#) places requirements on local authorities (and health boards) to prepare and publish their own Good Food Plans. The Committee agreed to scrutinise the proposed plan from the perspective of the role of local authorities in delivering a Good Food Nation. During its scrutiny it has also considered its earlier work on [community growing and allotments](#) (as part of its post-legislative scrutiny of the Community Empowerment Act) which is also relevant to the Plan.
6. The Plan cuts across a number of policy areas and therefore the remits of various committees. The Health, Social Care and Sport Committee and the Rural Affairs and Islands Committee have both also undertaken scrutiny of elements of the Plan.
7. The Scottish Government laid the draft Plan before Parliament on 27 June 2025, the final sitting day before Parliament's summer recess period began. This afforded Parliament the minimum time for scrutiny within the statutory timescales, which is regrettable, particularly given the cross-cutting nature of this important policy development.
8. The Committee worked with the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee to issue a [joint call for views](#) over Parliament's summer recess. This included questions focused on the local government, procurement and community growing based elements of the Plan. It is those responses which the Committee has taken into consideration in scrutinising the Plan.
9. The Committee then took oral evidence from two panels of witnesses from the following organisations:
  - Aberdeen City Council
  - ASSIST FM
  - East Ayrshire Council
  - Nourish Scotland
  - Scotland Excel
  - Scottish Food Commission
  - Zero Waste Scotland
10. The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands subsequently provided oral evidence to the Committee, accompanied by Scottish Government officials.

## Local authorities' role

11. The [2022 Act](#) places requirements on local authorities to prepare and publish their own Good Food Plans. These should set out outcomes, indicators, and policies on food-related issues affecting, among other things:
  - Social and economic wellbeing;
  - The environment, including climate change, wildlife and the natural environment;
  - Health and physical and mental wellbeing (including through the provision of health and social care services);
  - Economic development;
  - Animal welfare;
  - Education; and
  - Child poverty.
12. Under the Act a local authority's plan must set out:
  - the main outcomes in relation to food-related issues which the relevant authority wants to be achieved within the relevant authority's areas of responsibility;
  - indicators or other measures by which progress in achieving the outcomes may be assessed; and
  - the policies which the relevant authority intends to pursue in order to secure the achievement of the outcomes.
13. However [Section 10 of the Act](#), which sets out these requirements, is not yet in force. Once Section 10 is commenced local authorities will then have 12 months to develop and publish their local plans. In preparing their plans, local authorities must publish, and consult on, a draft, and "...have regard to any responses to the consultation". They should also "...have regard to the national good food nation plan". Local authorities will be required to publish progress reports every two years and review their plans every five years.
14. The national outcomes, indicators, targets, and policy actions set out in the proposed National Plan provide some direction and guidance for local authorities. The intention is to ensure a coordinated approach to food policy across the country.
15. The [Scottish Government says](#) it has worked collaboratively with local authorities and health boards throughout the legislative process. To assist in writing their plans, the Scottish Government published [guidance for "relevant authorities"](#) (local authorities and health boards) in March 2025.
16. The Scottish Government states that "...the procurement and provision of healthy, sustainable food produced in line with fair work practices is a national policy

objective, and the public procurement of food is expected to be a driver for systemic change in the food sector”.<sup>2</sup>

17. Local authorities spend around £83 million each year on the procurement of food, including groceries, frozen foods, meats, milk, fruit and vegetables and baked goods. This spend helps supply the products served by schools, nurseries, care homes and community centres across the country.<sup>3</sup> Scotland Excel highlight that around 34% of this spend is on Scottish products.<sup>4</sup>
18. The proposed Good Food Nation Plan summarises the procurement situation now but does not propose any new policies or targets in this area. It signposts another document, [Local Food for Everyone](#) (published January 2024) which highlights the importance of better access to procurement opportunities for local food producers. This discusses in some detail what the Scottish Government wants to achieve in the sense of “harnessing public sector procurement” and sets out how this can be achieved.

## Summary of evidence

19. Local authorities are a key component in Scotland's food system, and as described above their role is integral to the ambitions of the Good Food Nation Act. In preparing their local Good Food Nation plans under the Act they are to "have regard to" the national plan, which therefore will frame their own work once Section 10 of the Act comes into force.
20. The Committee was interested in exploring what the impact of the draft Plan might be on local authorities, how it fits amongst the plethora of existing duties and priorities, and how they meet the Act's requirements in the future, particularly in relation to supporting local supply chains through procurement.
21. Broadly speaking there was support for the vision which the Act provides. East Renfrewshire Council for example in its written submission welcomed the principle and ambition of the Good Food Nation initiative and supported the development of a national plan to coordinate food-related policies.<sup>5</sup> Phil Mackie from Aberdeen City Council said that the Plan:
- ” "...provides us with the basis for genuinely integrating good food into a much broader range of our activities." <sup>6</sup>
22. Professor Emilie Combet from the Scottish Food Commission emphasised the importance of getting started <sup>7</sup>, a point echoed by Jane Beasley from Zero Waste Scotland who said:
- ” "There is a need for speed in this space, so we should not chase perfection in what is a very complex area. We need to get moving... In an area as complicated as food and food systems, we need to get things off the ground." <sup>8</sup>
23. The Highland Good Food Partnership however stated in its written submission that the Plan "...does not propose any new actions and targets, neither does it commit to new indicators or areas of policy development". Anna Chworow from Nourish Scotland concurred:
- ” "The plan is a very comprehensive summary or audit of existing policies that relate, in different ways, to the food system, but it does not propose anything new." <sup>9</sup>
24. The Committee put this to the Cabinet Secretary, who responded that this first iteration of a Good Food Nation Plan will be the first in a long line of plans (under the Act it must be renewed every five years, and progress reports must be provided every two years). She said:
- ” "...the indicators that we have brought forward for the outcomes will help to provide the initial baseline from which we can look to progress. Although I understand and appreciate the concern about the lack of new targets or indicators, that is not to say that we will not develop that work." <sup>10</sup>
25. The importance of effective measurement of the impact of the Plan is discussed in more detail below.

26. The Good Food Nation vision is, by its nature, cross-cutting given the complexity of the food system and its importance to society. It includes health and wellbeing, environmental issues, economic development, education and animal welfare. The Cabinet Secretary described it as being a big change to the way that the Government works, and in how different practices and engagement will be embedded across Government portfolios.<sup>11</sup>
27. That cross-cutting nature of a Good Food Nation presents challenges too for local authorities, as East Renfrewshire described in its written submission:
- ” It is essential that no policy within the proposed plan conflicts with or undermines others, such as Public Procurement or Community Wealth Building. While Part 2 of the plan outlines a cross-sectoral approach to developing national policy across Scottish Government directives, this has not always been reflected in practice at the local government level. Any overlap between the proposed plan and other initiatives must be addressed through cohesive policy development to ensure mutual support and alignment.”<sup>12</sup>
28. The Committee asked the Cabinet Secretary whether there is a "cluttered planscape" which local authorities must manage. She responded that from the outside it can look cluttered, but said that the Scottish Government is trying to embed a different way of working across Government and with local government and health boards. She said:
- ” I do not see it as just another thing that people do and tick off - we are giving effect to this plan. It is, I hope, the first in a long line of plans.”<sup>13</sup>
29. East Ayrshire Council told the Committee that it already has good engagement on a number of themes connected to the Plan. It sees the Plan as linking to the strategic aims of both local government and the Scottish Government, and that there are significant links between the Plan and the authority's plans around poverty and inequality, jobs and skills, wellbeing, climate change and vibrant communities.<sup>14</sup>
30. Similarly, Phil Mackie from Aberdeen City Council said that the authority already recognises the 'centrality' of good food, and welcomes the legislation in providing "...the basis for genuinely integrating good food into a much broader range of our activities.”<sup>15</sup>

- 31. The Committee recognises the importance of the underlying vision of a Good Food Nation in providing a framework that extends across multiple policy portfolios, and the challenges there will be in making that cross-cutting vision a reality. Local authorities in particular will need support in delivering a Good Food Nation through the provision of guidance and appropriate resources.**

## Timescales for implementation

32. The Committee heard that the 32 local authorities are at very different stages of preparedness in delivering a Good Food Nation. Nicola Joiner from ASSIST FM said that a number have worked in this space for some time, whilst others have not

yet begun and there will therefore be greater challenges for them in meeting the requirements of the Act.<sup>16</sup>

33. Under Section 10 of the Act, local authorities (and health boards) will be required to prepare local Good Food Nation Plans. Although that provision has not yet been brought into force it was anticipated by stakeholders that those plans will be required to be in place by late 2027. The Committee heard in both written and oral evidence that there will be challenges for local authorities in meeting that timescale, particularly because local elections will take place in 2027 which will impact on their capacity to implement the new requirements.

34. Phil Mackie from Aberdeen City Council for example explained that due to time constraints a 2027 deadline for publishing a local Plan might necessitate a more desk-based exercise rather than a more collaborative one, which would be preferable.<sup>17</sup> He went on to highlight the importance of taking the time to get it right:

” Fundamentally, the challenge is not about whether we can integrate; it is about ensuring that we have the opportunity to integrate to the best of the legislative vision... It is key that having time to deliver on this agenda is seen to be as important as other demands that are placed on the NHS and on local government.”<sup>18</sup>

35. The Highland Council's written submission made a case for local authorities being given 12 months' notice before Section 10 is implemented, in effect providing a total of 24 months' notice before local authorities must publish their local plans. They described 12 months as being insufficient time to prepare, consult, approve and publish a plan.<sup>19</sup>

36. Professor Combet from the SFC said that local authorities potentially have very valid concerns about the timescales, "especially if the local authorities are starting very early, from ground zero, and if the staff, the resources and the collaboration with neighbouring authorities are not in place."<sup>20</sup> In response the Commission is mapping key stakeholders in order to better understand the different starting points of local authorities.

37. The Committee put witnesses' concerns about a 2027 deadline for local Plans to be in place to the Cabinet Secretary. She indicated that discussions about that timescale with local authorities are ongoing to establish what level of resource might be required and when it might be appropriate to commence the Section 10 requirements. She said:

” It is not in anyone's interest for section 10 of the Act to be commenced when local authorities feel that they do not have the time or resources that they need to produce effective plans - we want to make sure that they are able to do that.”<sup>21</sup>

**38. The Committee welcomes the reassurance by the Cabinet Secretary that the Scottish Government is mindful of the pressures which a 2027 deadline for local plans would put on local authorities, particularly given that local**

**elections will take place that year. The Committee requests that the Cabinet Secretary keeps it updated on her conclusions regarding the commencement of Section 10 of the Act.**

## Local authority resources

39. The Committee also heard concerns from witnesses about how authorities will deliver on the ambitions of the Plan without sufficient resources, particularly given the ongoing financial constraints they are experiencing. Funding issues and local authority capacity were raised by a number of respondents to the Committee's call for views.
40. Scotland Excel for example argued in its written submission that there needs to be investment in capacity and innovation, such as in market development, supplier engagement, and training for public sector buyers. Nicola Joiner from ASSIST FM agreed that resources will be a challenge given that officers from across different teams will be involved in delivering a Good Food Nation, and that the consultation process itself around draft local Plans will be time consuming.<sup>22</sup>
41. Professor Combet acknowledged that there are existing big constraints on local authorities' finances. In response, the Commission could potentially act as an advocate for additional resources, and is already thinking creatively about how the ambitions of the plan might be delivered.<sup>23</sup>
42. In Nourish Scotland's oral evidence to the Committee, Anna Chworow said that the Good Food Nation Bill's Financial Memorandum had not provided clarity on resourcing its implementation by authorities. The organisation has been advocating for a reallocation of some of the agricultural budget to local authorities to enable local procurement.<sup>24</sup>
43. The Committee put those concerns to the Cabinet Secretary, who was mindful of the challenges that the Scottish Government has faced in developing its national Plan, and in response acknowledged that authorities may need some resources to support their development of local plans. Discussions are therefore ongoing about whether those resources could be available before commencement of Section 10.<sup>25</sup> She highlighted too that ultimately delivery of a Good Food Nation sits in many different policy areas and not just one portfolio budget.<sup>26</sup>

44. **Delivery of the Good Food Nation Plan cuts across numerous policy areas and funding it does not therefore fit neatly into traditional budget lines at a national or local level. Arguably the complexity of issues such as food means there needs to be innovation in how funding is provided in the future. The Committee therefore recommends that the Scottish Government establishes how new ways of working (such as the delivery of a Good Food Nation) will be underpinned by increased flexibility across budget portfolios.**

45. **The Committee requests that the Scottish Government provides clarity at the earliest opportunity about what resources will be made available to authorities to develop and implement their local plans.**

## Collaboration

46. The Cabinet Secretary said that the cross-cutting nature of the Good Food Nation presents a big change to the way that the Scottish Government works:
- ” ... and how we embed different practices and engage across portfolios in addition to the consideration that will have to be given to the plan. It will also be new for local authorities and health boards.”<sup>27</sup>
47. Within local authorities, witnesses highlighted the opportunities which the Plan presents for collaboration between organisations, for example through the Ayrshire Economic Partnership which brings together public and environmental health, leisure trusts, and community organisations.<sup>28</sup> East Ayrshire Council has brought together a group of council officers from a range of service areas to collaborate<sup>29</sup>, and in Aberdeen the local authority and health and social care partnership already work together closely.<sup>30</sup>
48. Anna Chworow from Nourish Scotland noted that there are some early examples of collaboration across Glasgow and the Tayside region. She went on to say that there needs to be support at a national level:
- ” ...the Scottish Government or, potentially, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities has an important convening role to play in bringing more collaboration into that space. The Living Good Food Nation Lab is another part of this, but it is only a project with an end date, and we need longer-term structural mechanisms for ongoing cooperation and collaboration.”<sup>31</sup>
49. Both East Ayrshire and Aberdeen City councils highlighted the coordinating role that community planning partnerships (CPPs) are playing in their authorities.<sup>32</sup> The Cabinet Secretary also noted the potential for CPPs to provide an important forum, and went on to suggest that the Scottish Government could look to issue guidance on community planning by asking CPPs to consider the Plan and its outcomes in relation to work they are doing.<sup>33</sup>

50. **The Committee welcomes the Cabinet Secretary's confirmation of the role that community planning partnerships (CPPs) might play in delivering a Good Food Nation. It requests that it is kept updated about the Cabinet Secretary's proposal that guidance for CPPs could be developed.**

51. East Renfrewshire Council expressed concerns that the role of the third sector is not sufficiently included in the draft Plan:

” "The plan under-represents the critical role of Third Sector and community groups in delivering a Good Food Nation. Local authorities should be encouraged to define collaboration and partnership expectations with these groups. We recommend that the national plan more explicitly support community participation and engagement." <sup>34</sup>

52. This question was put by the Committee to the Cabinet Secretary, who acknowledged that this may be an area for the Scottish Government to further reflect on. <sup>35</sup>

**53. The Committee welcomes the Cabinet Secretary's reflection that the role of the third sector may not be adequately reflected in the Plan. The Committee recommends that the final version of the Plan addresses this.**

## Planning and licensing functions

54. The Committee was interested in stakeholders' views on what role the planning and licensing functions of local authorities might have in helping deliver a Good Food Nation, particularly in tackling issues such as the prevalence of fast-food outlets close to schools.

55. In Aberdeen, health impact assessments have been introduced into local development applications to address such issues, and Phil Mackie noted the challenges which licensing teams can face in balancing economic development with health and social outcomes. <sup>36</sup> Nourish Scotland told the Committee that there is certainly scope to improve planning guidance, and that there is an issue where local authorities can struggle to respond effectively to legal challenges to their planning decisions:

” "...what is important is that, when planning decisions are challenged...the authority has some backing from the Scottish Government to pursue and see through the legal actions that often follow. At the moment, local authorities do not have the resources to fight lengthy legal battles, and they often acquiesce in the face of quite relentless corporate influence." <sup>37</sup>

56. The Committee asked the Cabinet Secretary about where a Good Food Nation sits in respect of supporting businesses, and she responded that the National Planning Framework 4 provides a policy for developments which may impact health and wellbeing, and that those planning decisions are for local authorities to make.

**57. The Committee is concerned by the difficulties that local authorities may face in responding to legal appeals by businesses seeking to overturn planning decisions which refuse permission to site fast food outlets close to schools. It would seem that such outlets contradict the vision of a Good Food Nation. It therefore urges the Scottish Government to consider how it might best mitigate those challenges which local authorities experience.**

**Although outwith the scope of this Committee's scrutiny, there are clearly strong links too to the Scottish Government's ambitions to improve public health and tackle obesity.**

## Procurement

58. The Committee was particularly interested in how local authorities and other bodies can best ensure that local food producers and suppliers benefit from council procurement, and whether the Plan might support local businesses.
59. The [proposed Good Food Nation Plan](#) summarises the current position regarding procurement but does not propose any new policies or targets in this area. It signposts another document, [Local Food for Everyone](#) (published January 2024) which highlights the importance of better access to procurement opportunities for local food producers.
60. Hugh Carr from Scotland Excel described the challenges there can be in encouraging smaller providers to apply for a place in the national procurement framework, and the efforts that Scotland Excel has made to address this through improving the visibility of every tender opportunity to local suppliers. In their view the Plan could help improve the profile of those kind of opportunities.<sup>38</sup>
61. Andrew Kennedy from East Ayrshire Council told the Committee that the market has shifted through challenges such as food inflation and the rising cost of business, and described the difficulties which businesses are now facing:
- ” Even keeping your business afloat is a real challenge just now, never mind considering complex procurement processes to look at future business.”<sup>39</sup>
62. East Renfrewshire Council's written evidence also noted the challenges which small and medium enterprises (SMEs) face in engaging with the procurement process:
- ” Evidence suggests that the procurement process can be cumbersome for smaller businesses. Additional support will be necessary, particularly around the application process and the potential for cooperative or partnership bids. This would enable SMEs to better manage scale, skills, and capacity when bidding for public sector contracts.”<sup>40</sup>
63. Some respondents to the call for views would like to see the proposed National Plan provide a stronger mandate for local authorities to prioritise Scottish produce in procurement:
- The Scottish Crofting Federation acknowledged the flexibility provided by the 2014 Procurement Act and notes that councils have some “...margin of discretion to consider additional factors other than price”. They believe “...these policies do not seem to work, and flexibility is not enough”.<sup>41</sup>
  - The Care Inspectorate made a similar point with regards to procurement and children's services. It is their understanding that local authorities “...undertake

procurement and buy in bulk as this is more cost effective for their budget".<sup>42</sup>

- Seafood Scotland would like to see "...stronger mechanisms and incentives for local authorities to procure high-quality Scottish seafood - particularly from small- and medium-sized processors and suppliers - within school meals and other public sector catering".<sup>43</sup>

64. The Committee highlighted to the Cabinet Secretary a case in East Ayrshire where a local supplier recently lost a contract to supply organic milk to East Ayrshire schools, which was instead awarded to an international dairy company. The Committee asked whether the boundaries are clear enough for councils to offer contracts to local suppliers, even if at a higher price. The Cabinet Secretary responded that authorities must operate within a mix of international and domestic legislation but that there should be sufficient flexibility within that system.<sup>44</sup>

65. In their written submission Aberdeenshire Council called for more guidance and resources for councils to be able to support small and medium-sized local producers to access public contracts.<sup>45</sup> Similarly, Highland Council said:

” There needs to be clearer, practical guidance from the Scottish Government on how to embed Good Food Nation principles into procurement without breaching existing regulations. Flexibility to prioritise local, sustainable, and ethical food is essential.”<sup>46</sup>

66. The Committee asked the Cabinet Secretary about procurement guidance for local authorities. She highlighted in response that there have been gradual increases in the numbers of contracts going to SMEs, which now number around 17,000. A Scottish Government official went on to outline a range of action taken by the Scottish Government in this area, including the funding of national toolkits, systems and guidance, in addition to the national public contracts website.<sup>47</sup>

**67. The role of local food producers will be important in delivering a Good Food Nation, but the Committee believes that there are ongoing challenges for SMEs to effectively engage in procurement processes. It therefore recommends that the Scottish Government listens to those concerns and reviews the existing guidance and support which is available.**

## Measuring impact

68. The Plan acknowledges the importance of being able to measure its impact on creating a Good Food Nation, but also recognises that in a number of areas there is a lack of available evidence. The Committee asked stakeholders what more should be done to identify appropriate indicators, for example around public sector procurement, and to what extent there is data available at a local level to help track progress.

69. Scotland Excel told the Committee that they collect a lot of data from suppliers, and

the Scottish Government collects information on the country of origin of products in order to provide local authorities with data around where their core spend is sourced from. From that they know that local procurement has increased from 28% to 34% over the past 8 years.<sup>48</sup>

70. Phil Mackie from Aberdeen City Council noted that areas such as the health benefit to a population might take 25 years to see a meaningful impact, for example in reducing type 2 diabetes rates.<sup>49</sup> He said:

” We not only need the monitoring and evaluation frameworks to be thought through but also to know when we might expect to see impacts that are meaningful rather than simply a logic that suggests that the situation has changed.”<sup>50</sup> [2 Sep Col 20]

71. East Ayrshire Council explained that sometimes individual measurements can obscure the affect that bigger decisions may have had. Whilst food spend might be one such measure, that has been impacted by inflation, by the authority's decision to halve the price of school meals (increasing uptake by 30%), and by changes to nutritional standards.
72. Nourish Scotland noted in its written submission that “...legislation states that the National Plan must serve as a guide for local authorities and health boards, but it is for those bodies themselves to determine the outcomes of the plans” and concluded that that approach “...is confusing and appears contradictory”.<sup>51</sup> In their oral evidence to the Committee they went on to describe the importance of there being coherence across outcomes so that they do not pull in different directions.<sup>52</sup>
73. The Committee asked the Cabinet Secretary whether it will be confusing for local authorities to have different sets of outcomes, and how it will be determined whether they are compliant with the Act. In her response she described the importance of local authorities having sufficient flexibility in being able to develop outcomes and indicators that are most relevant to their area.<sup>53</sup> She went on to say:
- ” Once the national plan is published at the end of the year and decisions have been made about the commencement of section 10, the plans will have some level of coherence, because the legislation is quite prescriptive; there will have to be regard to the national plan, which sets out the outcomes that the Scottish ministers have put into it.”<sup>54</sup>
74. The Cabinet Secretary was also asked about the availability of procurement data at a local level. She highlighted that by the second iteration of the Plan a baseline will have been established and any gaps filled:
- ” The next version of the Plan will certainly have a lot more information... Because we will have been able to get the baseline information from the indicators that we have against the outcomes that are set out in the Plan at the moment... Although the Plan will be revised only a five-yearly basis, it will be reviewed every two years.”<sup>55</sup>

75. **The Committee recognises that the draft Plan is just the first, and that**

**subsequent iterations will build on the ongoing learning of both the Scottish Government and all parties involved in delivering a Good Food Nation. It will be important that the Scottish Parliament monitors the impact which the Plan is having on an ongoing basis. The Committee will therefore consider recommending to its successor committee that it undertakes scrutiny of the Plan's impact in session 7 of the Parliament.**

## Role of the Scottish Food Commission

76. The Good Food Nation Act establishes a new Scottish Food Commission (SFC) to support, advise and improve the efforts of Scottish Ministers and relevant authorities towards becoming a Good Food Nation. Its main functions will include:
- scrutinising and making recommendations in relation to the Good Food Nation Plans and progress reports;
  - conducting research; and
  - providing advice to Scottish ministers, Local Authorities and Health Boards in relation to their good food nation plans.
77. At the time of writing the Chair and three members have been appointed, and recruitment of a chief executive and staff has not yet been concluded.
78. Witnesses hoped that the SFC will have a coordinating role and will be supportive of local authorities in providing guidance whilst also monitoring practice. Nicola Joiner from ASSIST FM suggested:
- ” "...it is there for answers and support, but also to keep us following the core principles of the Act and making sure that we are doing what we are supposed to do - a double-edged sword of keeping us right and guiding us in the right way." <sup>56</sup>
79. In her oral evidence to the Committee, Professor Combet from the SFC (one of three members of the Commission who has been recently appointed) explained that its role will be that of a 'critical friend' which supports and enables best practice and facilitates cooperation. In doing so it hopes to accelerate the delivery of local plans by:
- ” "...getting the right people together in the same space to exchange best practice and think creatively about what can do done. It is all about moving away from what we are already doing towards something that is creative, innovative and transformative." <sup>57</sup>
80. The Cabinet Secretary reiterated that the Scottish Government envisages the role of the SFC being to independently assess the effectiveness of local plans. It will help identify where there may be data gaps, in providing both a scrutiny and research function, whilst also supporting authorities with advice.

- ” "...if something is not working, the Food Commission will be able to set that out so that we can set out how we intend to change course... Scrutiny is very important, but the research element and the provision of further advice on the broad range of areas that the plan covers will also be helpful." <sup>58</sup>

**81. The Committee recognises that the Scottish Food Commission is still in the process of being fully established, and acknowledges the important dual role that it will play in the future in providing both scrutiny and support. It looks forward to seeing how those functions work in practice. The Committee welcomes in particular the focus on innovation which the Commission hopes to have, which will be important in delivering the cross-cutting ambitions of the Good Food Nation vision.**

## Allotments and community growing

82. The Committee has previously undertaken post-legislative scrutiny of the Community Empowerment Act (Scotland) 2015, including implementation of Section 9 of the Act <sup>59</sup> which covers the provision of allotments by local authorities.

83. The Plan includes the following aspirations:

- ” “We want the people of Scotland to be active participants in building and maintaining a Good Food Nation. Encouraging and empowering people to grow their own food and participate in community food initiatives can have a range of positive impacts on mental and physical wellbeing as well as building a sense of community.”

and

- ” “We aim to make more land available for community growing in all its forms and enable more people to access allotments and growing sites. The NPF4 is clear that local development plans should create healthier places, including opportunities for food growing and allotments. Development proposals that will have positive effects on health will be supported: for example where they incorporate opportunities for community food growing or allotments.”

84. There is an existing requirement (under the 2015 Act) for local authorities to prepare local food-growing strategies, which has clear links across to the Plan. The Committee also heard that some authorities have waited to develop Food Growing Strategies until they could do so alongside their Good Food Nation Plans. <sup>60</sup>

85. In its scrutiny of the 2015 Act the Committee concluded that difficulty accessing land is an enormous barrier for many communities with food growing aspirations. During its recent evidence sessions with witnesses the Committee asked whether there is anything in the proposed Good Food Nation Plan that might help overcome these barriers.

86. East Ayrshire Council believes there has been a shift since the Community

Empowerment Act, with an increase in the number of community organisations supporting health and skills through community growing and accessing grants to develop opportunities to do so. <sup>61</sup>

87. Professor Combet from the SFC expressed the hope that the Commission's work will in future will help enable stakeholders to use the existing powers available through the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015. <sup>62</sup> Anna Chworow from Nourish Scotland agreed, adding that cultural change is needed and greater recognition of the cultural importance of communities growing their own food. <sup>63</sup>

88. Glasgow Allotment Forum's written submission expressed disappointment at the Plan's lack of clear, meaningful actions and targets for allotments and community growing spaces. <sup>64</sup> Similarly, Growgreen Scotland called for a number of changes to be made to the Plan to better support allotments and community growing, including:

- Data collection on the availability of all types of community food growing as well as allotments and the level of unmet demand for these.
- A cross reference to the duty to prepare Food Growing Strategies covering the availability of land for all types of community growing, as well as duties relating to the provision of allotments.
- Recognition that Open Space Audits can also help identify availability and demand for growing spaces
- Monitoring of which Local Development Plans contain relevant and sufficient allocations or policies to promote and secure the delivery of community food growing spaces. <sup>65</sup>

89. The Committee asked the Cabinet Secretary whether the Plan will help to overcome barriers to communities' food-growing aspirations. She responded that she was hopeful it would, and cited also the Scottish Government's work on land reform, and an ongoing review of community rights to buy:

” ” "We understand that a few of the powers are difficult for community bodies to use, so we want to improve on that where possible. All of that will feed into the Good Food Nation outcomes." <sup>66</sup>

90. Witnesses were also asked about the role that market gardens might play in contributing to a Good Food Nation. Anna Chworow from Nourish Scotland noted that currently they are not sufficiently supported through the farm subsidy regime due to the relatively small amounts of land they use. Additional effort is needed to support small-scale production given the benefits it can bring to both urban and rural areas and in connecting people with food sources. <sup>67</sup> She went on to call for resources to have local procurement officers in place in local authorities to provide the support that small producers need.

**91. Widening opportunities for community food growing should be an important component of a successful Good Food Nation. The Committee**

would therefore refer the Scottish Government back to the conclusions of its previous inquiry into allotments and food growing which made a number of recommendations to improve access. It has sought updates from the Scottish Government on an annual basis on what progress has been made subsequently, however it has concluded that there has been little change, which is disappointing.

## Summary of recommendations

92. **The Committee recognises the importance of the underlying vision of a Good Food Nation in providing a framework that extends across multiple policy portfolios, and the challenges there will be in making that cross-cutting vision a reality. Local authorities in particular will need support in delivering a Good Food Nation through the provision of guidance and appropriate resources.**
93. **The Committee welcomes the reassurance by the Cabinet Secretary that the Scottish Government is mindful of the pressures which a 2027 deadline for local plans would put on local authorities, particularly given that local elections will take place that year. The Committee requests that the Cabinet Secretary keeps it updated on her conclusions regarding the commencement of Section 10 of the Act.**
94. **Delivery of the Good Food Nation Plan cuts across numerous policy areas and funding it does not therefore fit neatly into traditional budget lines at a national or local level. Arguably the complexity of issues such as food means there needs to be innovation in how funding is provided in the future. The Committee therefore recommends that the Scottish Government establishes how new ways of working (such as the delivery of a Good Food Nation) will be underpinned by increased flexibility across budget portfolios.**
95. **The Committee requests that the Scottish Government provides clarity at the earliest opportunity about what resources will be made available to authorities to develop and implement their local plans.**
96. **The Committee welcomes the Cabinet Secretary's confirmation of the role that community planning partnerships (CPPs) might play in delivering a Good Food Nation. It requests that it is kept updated about the Cabinet Secretary's proposal that guidance for CPPs could be developed.**
97. **The Committee welcomes the Cabinet Secretary's reflection that the role of the third sector may not be adequately reflected in the Plan. The Committee recommends that the final version of the Plan addresses this.**
98. **The Committee is concerned by the difficulties that local authorities may face in responding to legal appeals by businesses seeking to overturn planning decisions which refuse permission to site fast food outlets close to schools. It would seem that such outlets contradict the vision of a Good Food Nation. It therefore urges the Scottish Government to consider how it might best mitigate those challenges which local authorities experience. Although outwith the scope of this Committee's scrutiny, there are clearly strong links too to the Scottish Government's ambitions to improve public health and tackle obesity.**
99. **The role of local food producers will be important in delivering a Good Food Nation, but the Committee believes that there are ongoing challenges for SMEs to effectively engage in procurement processes. It therefore recommends that the Scottish Government listens to those concerns and reviews the existing guidance and support which is available.**

100. **The Committee recognises that the draft Plan is just the first, and that subsequent iterations will build on the ongoing learning of both the Scottish Government and all parties involved in delivering a Good Food Nation. It will be important that the Scottish Parliament monitors the impact which the Plan is having on an ongoing basis. The Committee will therefore consider recommending to its successor committee that it undertakes scrutiny of the Plan's impact in session 7 of the Parliament.**
  
101. **Widening opportunities for community food growing should be an important component of a successful Good Food Nation. The Committee would therefore refer the Scottish Government back to the conclusions of its previous inquiry into allotments and food growing which made a number of recommendations to improve access. It has sought updates from the Scottish Government on an annual basis on what progress has been made subsequently, however it has concluded that there has been little change, which is disappointing.**

# Annexe A: Extracts from Committee minutes

102. This annexe sets out relevant extracts from the minutes of the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee. Each main heading links to a webpage that gives access to:

- the agenda and public papers for the meeting;
- the Official Report of the meeting (public business only), and
- minutes of the meeting.

103. [20th Meeting 2026, Session 6, Tuesday 24 June 2025](#)

**Work programme (in private):** The Committee considered its work programme and agreed—

...its approach to consideration of the draft National Good Food Nation Plan.

104. [21st Meeting 2026, Session 6, Tuesday 2 September 2025](#)

**Proposed National Good Food Nation Plan:** The Committee took evidence from—

Hugh Carr, Director of Strategic Procurement & Commissioning and Laura Muir, Strategic Procurement Manager, Scotland Excel;

Nicola Joiner, National Chair, ASSIST FM;

Andrew Kennedy, Head of Facilities and Property Management, East Ayrshire Council;

Phil Mackie, Consultant in Public Health/Prevention Lead, Aberdeen City Health & Social Care Partnership, Aberdeen City Council;

and then from—

Jane Beasley, Director of Circular Economy Delivery, Zero Waste Scotland;

Anna Chworow, Deputy Director, Nourish Scotland;

Professor Emilie Combet, Commissioner, Scottish Food Commission.

**Proposed National Good Food Nation Plan (in private):** The Committee considered the evidence heard earlier in the meeting.

105. [22nd Meeting 2026, Session 6, Tuesday 9 September 2025](#)

**Proposed National Good Food Nation Plan:** The Committee took evidence from—

Mairi Gougeon, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands;

Tracy McCollin, Head of Good Food Nation Team;

Laura Hunter, Procurement Policy, Scottish Government.

**Proposed National Good Food Nation Plan (in private):** The Committee considered the evidence heard earlier in the meeting.

106. [24th Meeting 2026, Session 6, Thursday 23 September 2025](#)

**Proposed National Good Food Nation Plan (in private):** The Committee agreed a draft report.

## Annexe B: Evidence

107. The Committee issued a joint call for views with the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee between 30 June and 15 August 2025, to which 68 responses were received. These are [published on the Parliament's website](#).
108. At its [meeting on the 2 September 2025](#) the Committee then took oral evidence from two panels of witnesses from the following organisations:
- Aberdeen City Council
  - ASSIST FM
  - East Ayrshire Council
  - Nourish Scotland
  - Scotland Excel
  - Scottish Food Commission
  - Zero Waste Scotland
109. At its [meeting on the 9 September 2025](#) the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands subsequently provided oral evidence to the Committee, accompanied by Scottish Government officials.

- 1 [Good Food Nation - Food and drink - gov.scot](#)
- 2 [Public Procurement and Property Case study: how Scotland Excel's evolved portfolio of food frameworks is benefitting Scotland's economy - Public Procurement and Property](#)
- 3 [Public Procurement and Property Case study: how Scotland Excel's evolved portfolio of food frameworks is benefitting Scotland's economy - Public Procurement and Property](#)
- 4 [Sustainable Procurement](#)
- 5 [Response 460549395 to Good Food Nation Proposed National Plan - Scottish Parliament - Citizen Space](#)
- 6 Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee. Official Report, 2 September 2025, Col 4
- 7 Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee. Official Report, 2 September 2025, Col 23
- 8 Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee. Official Report, 2 September 2025, Col 23
- 9 Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee. Official Report, 2 September 2025, Col 23
- 10 Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee. Official Report, 9 September 2025, Col 3
- 11 Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee. Official Report, 9 September 2025, Col 9
- 12 [Response 460549395 to Good Food Nation Proposed National Plan - Scottish Parliament - Citizen Space](#)
- 13 Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee. Official Report, 9 September 2025, Col 11
- 14 Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee. Official Report, 2 September 2025, Col 3
- 15 Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee. Official Report, 2 September 2025, Col 4
- 16 Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee. Official Report, 2 September 2025, Col 6
- 17 Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee. Official Report, 2 September 2025, Col 5
- 18 Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee. Official Report, 2 September 2025, Col 8

- 19 [Response 880549367 to Good Food Nation Proposed National Plan - Scottish Parliament - Citizen Space](#)
- 20 Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee. Official Report, 2 September 2025, Col 27
- 21 Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee. Official Report, 9 September 2025, Col 8
- 22 Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee. Official Report, 2 September 2025, Col 17
- 23 Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee. Official Report, 2 September 2025, Col 26
- 24 Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee. Official Report, 2 September 2025, Col 26
- 25 Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee. Official Report, 9 September 2025, Col 8
- 26 Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee. Official Report, 9 September 2025, Col 10
- 27 Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee. Official Report, 9 September 2025, Col 9
- 28 Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee. Official Report, 2 September 2025, Col 2
- 29 Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee. Official Report, 2 September 2025, Col 7
- 30 Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee. Official Report, 2 September 2025, Col 4
- 31 Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee. Official Report, 2 September 2025, Col 30
- 32 Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee. Official Report, 2 September 2025, Col 7
- 33 Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee. Official Report, 9 September 2025, Col 17
- 34 [Response 460549395 to Good Food Nation Proposed National Plan - Scottish Parliament - Citizen Space](#)
- 35 Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee. Official Report, 9 September 2025, Col 17
- 36 Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee. Official Report, 2 September 2025, Col 9

- 37 Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee. Official Report, 2 September 2025, Col 29
- 38 Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee. Official Report, 2 September 2025, Col 12
- 39 Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee. Official Report, 2 September 2025, Col 12
- 40 [Response 460549395 to Good Food Nation Proposed National Plan - Scottish Parliament - Citizen Space](#)
- 41 [Response 833525462 to Good Food Nation Proposed National Plan - Scottish Parliament - Citizen Space](#)
- 42 [Response 1035838089 to Good Food Nation Proposed National Plan - Scottish Parliament - Citizen Space](#)
- 43 [Response 180307062 to Good Food Nation Proposed National Plan - Scottish Parliament - Citizen Space](#)
- 44 Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee. Official Report, 9 September 2025, Col 12
- 45 [Response 258587732 to Good Food Nation Proposed National Plan - Scottish Parliament - Citizen Space](#)
- 46 [Response 880549367 to Good Food Nation Proposed National Plan - Scottish Parliament - Citizen Space](#)
- 47 Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee. Official Report, 9 September 2025, Col 13
- 48 Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee. Official Report, 2 September 2025, Col 19
- 49 Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee. Official Report, 2 September 2025, Col 20
- 50 Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee. Official Report, 2 September 2025, Col 20
- 51 [Response 553458694 to Good Food Nation Proposed National Plan - Scottish Parliament - Citizen Space](#)
- 52 Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee. Official Report, 2 September 2025, Col 24
- 53 Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee. Official Report, 9 September 2025, Col 3
- 54 Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee. Official Report, 9 September 2025, Col 5

**Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee**

Proposed Good Food Nation Plan: Scrutiny by the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee, 5th Report 2025 (Session 6)

- 55 Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee. Official Report, 9 September 2025, Col 18
- 56 Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee. Official Report, 2 September 2025, Col 21
- 57 Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee. Official Report, 2 September 2025, Col 30
- 58 Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee. Official Report, 9 September 2025, Col 18
- 59 Allotments and community growing: the impact of Part 9 of the Community Empowerment Act | Scottish Parliament
- 60 Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee. Official Report, 2 September 2025, Col 32
- 61 Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee. Official Report, 2 September 2025, Col 18
- 62 Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee. Official Report, 2 September 2025, Col 31
- 63 Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee. Official Report, 2 September 2025, Col 31
- 64 Response 500335362 to Good Food Nation Proposed National Plan - Scottish Parliament - Citizen Space
- 65 Response 178481087 to Good Food Nation Proposed National Plan - Scottish Parliament - Citizen Space
- 66 Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee. Official Report, 9 September 2025, Col 16
- 67 Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee. Official Report, 2 September 2025, Col 33

