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airson Ionmhas

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Edward Mountain MSP
Convener
Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee
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Dear Edward,

Government consultation on a proposed Wellbeing and Sustainable Development Bill

I am writing to let you know that we are today launching a public consultation which seeks views on the proposed Wellbeing and Sustainable Development (Scotland) Bill.

The Scottish Government is committed to ensuring Scotland is a country where people, businesses and communities realise their full potential through opportunities and choice, while handing the next generation a country of which we can be proud. Our ambition to put people and planet at the heart of our economy has never been more important than in the current moment as we tackle the cost of living and climate crises. To this end, we are now seeking views to help inform the scope of any legislation for a proposed Wellbeing and Sustainable Development Bill.

Since Scotland's National Performance Framework (NPF) was first published, some have expressed concern that the requirements on public bodies to achieve the outcomes must be strengthened in order to achieve full implementation and embed the NPF. This includes the Finance and Public Administration Committee (FPAC) report 'Ambitions into Action'. This report highlighted ways that the NPF can continually improve, including regarding accountability, budgeting for outcomes and integrating the NPF into the systems and processes of government.

The proposed Bill aims to address these concerns in a number of ways, to provide support to public bodies on how to work to achieve the National Outcomes. The Bill is intended to further improve decision making and the implementation of the NPF to ensure that all policy and delivery decision making is focused on increasing the wellbeing of people living in Scotland, both now and in the future.

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Officials are considering how to provide definitions of ‘wellbeing’ and ‘sustainable development’. These would help to outline these concepts to public bodies clearly, thereby supporting them to embed the National Outcomes and wellbeing and sustainable development principles in decision making. This will ensure that we transition to a wellbeing economy that has the interests of future generations built into the decisions made today.

The proposed Bill may also strengthen existing duties on public bodies, including extending these to Scottish Ministers. These stronger duties would clarify the extent to which they can be systematically and consistently held to account for their contribution towards the National Outcomes. This will also require consideration to be given to the means for support, scrutiny and accountability with regards to any new duties.

The Government is also seeking views on the establishment of a Future Generations Commissioner (FGC), who by acting as a guardian of future generations would provide advice and support to public bodies to achieve these duties. We are considering how an FGC could hold Scottish Ministers and public bodies accountable for fulfilling the duties, for example by publishing reports on performance.

The Bill may also include effective ‘ways of working’ for public bodies to better set and achieve objectives in line with wellbeing and sustainable development, including on topics such as long-term decision-making, collaboration, involvement, prevention, and integration.

The Committee will note that Sarah Boyack MSP (Labour) has lodged final proposals for a Member’s Bill. Ms Boyack’s Bill completed its consultation on 24 March 2023 with 69 responses. The consultation sought stakeholder views on the same proposals outlined above. The analysis of Ms Boyack’s Bill can be found [here](#). We will continue to keep in contact with Ms Boyack’s team as both Bills progress.

I trust this information on the consultation is helpful and I look forward to sharing the results in due course. Please do contact me if you have any questions.

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