



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

# Scotland's Future Forum Annual Report 2022-23

**2 May 2024**

**Reference: SPCB (2024) Paper 37**

## Executive summary

1. Scotland's Futures Forum is the Scottish Parliament's futures think-tank. It is formally constituted as a limited company and is owned by the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, which is the company's sole member.
2. This paper provides an update on the Futures Forum's operations. Annex A is an annual report on its activities in 2022-23. Annex B contains the Futures Forum's audited accounts from 2022-23.
3. The SPCB is invited to note the 2022-23 annual report and accounts from Scotland's Futures Forum.

## Background

4. The Futures Forum works to stimulate debate on Scotland's long-term future. It brings people together to look beyond the electoral cycle and explore the challenges and opportunities that Scotland faces.
5. Its work is governed by a board of directors that is chaired by the Presiding Officer and composed of both MSPs and non-MSPs. The MSPs currently on the board are Maggie Chapman MSP, Alex Rowley MSP, Evelyn Tweed MSP and Brian Whittle MSP.
6. The non-MSP directors are Kirsten Hogg (SCVO); Diarmaid Lawlor (Scottish Futures Trust); Esther Robertson (former chair of NHS 24 and member of the Consultative Steering Group); and Sarah Munro (Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art). Full biographies are available on the [Futures Forum website](#).

7. The Futures Forum's status working at arm's length from the Parliament allows it to partner with Committees and a range of external organisations. It uses these partnerships to support MSPs and others to engage with issues in ways that are different from but complementary to parliamentary business.

## **Issues and options**

8. The annual report and accounts cover the Futures Forum's activities in the financial year 2022-23.

9. The work of the Futures Forum is intended to be a resource for the Parliament, and Scotland more generally, in supporting the national debate to include consideration of the long term.

10. This report covers our return to holding in-person events and the first steps in supporting committees with large-scale events.

11. Our events covered the challenges to democracy from technological innovation, a contribution to the national discussion on education, and a joint event with the Finance and Public Administration Committee on the subject of tax.

12. Since the annual report period, the Futures Forum has developed its work in supporting committees and exploring issues of interest to the Parliament more widely.

13. This has included conferences on the relationship between local and central government with the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee, and on land use in Scotland with both the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee and the Rural Affairs and Islands Committee.

14. The latter event drew directly on a Futures Forum-supported event at the 2023 Festival of Politics, showing the role of the Futures Forum in linking together different parts of the Parliament's work for maximum effect.

## **Governance**

15. The SPCB is the sole company member of Scotland's Futures Forum and is therefore entitled to receive reports on its activities.

## **Resource implications**

16. The Parliament provides 100% of the Futures Forum's budget each year. In 2022-23, the Futures Forum received a budget of £146,500. This covered the staffing costs (including VAT) of a part-time Head of Business at grade 5

(0.8 FTE) and a Business Co-ordinator at grade 2 (0.95 FTE) and the running costs.

17. Staff are employed on secondment from the Scottish Parliamentary Service and supported by Susan Duffy (Group Head of Engagement and Communications) who as Company Secretary acts as line manager for the Head of Business.

18. Since the reporting period, staffing has changed. Rob Littlejohn has returned to the Parliament on a job swap with Susan Mansfield, who has come to the Futures Forum, until the end of the session. Susan Duffy, the Company Secretary leaves the Parliament on 30 April 2024 and her replacement is not yet in post.

19. The funding from the SPCB also supports events and projects and the maintenance of a separate website.

20. The Futures Forum also benefits from support from the Parliamentary Service, such as in event organisation and the preparation and auditing of accounts. It works on a co-production model to access resources of external organisations.

## **Publication Scheme**

21. It is recommended that this paper should be published in line with the SPCB's Publication Scheme.

## **Next steps**

22. The SPCB will continue to receive reports on the Futures Forum's work on an annual basis, and on request if required.

## **Decision**

23. The SPCB is invited to note the 2022-23 annual report and accounts from Scotland's Futures Forum.

Susan Mansfield, Head of Business

**Scotland's Futures Forum**

April 2024