

**Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee**  
**Thursday 20 June 2024**  
**17<sup>th</sup> Meeting, 2024 (Session 6)**

## **National Outcomes**

1. In conclusion of its [National Outcomes](#) work, the Committee is taking evidence this week from the Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture.
2. The Scottish Government published its [Consultation with Parliament in connection with the Review of National Outcomes](#) on 1 May 2024.
3. Having front-loaded our work in this area – beginning on [1 June 2023](#) with an evidence session with the Scottish Council on Global Affairs and followed by input from a range of other witnesses (see the SPICe briefing at **Annexe A**) – the Committee will consider a draft report in September.

**Clerks to the Committee**  
**June 2024**

## Annexe A: SPICe briefing



# Inquiry into the National Outcomes – evidence session with Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture

## Context

Following a public consultation, the Scottish Government is [currently consulting the Parliament on proposed changes to the National Performance Framework](#). SPICe has [published a blog examining the current review of outcomes in the NPF](#).

To inform CEEAC's input into the Finance and Public Administration Committee's review of the National Outcomes, the Committee is holding a short inquiry into whether the current National Outcomes and Indicators aligned to the Scottish Government's international work are appropriate. This work builds on the Committee's previous report on an [Inquiry into the Scottish Government's international work](#) which reported in April 2022.

The Committee has previously held six evidence sessions for the NPF inquiry.

On 1 June 2023, the [Committee took evidence from](#):

- Professor Stephen Gethins, Professor of Practice in International Relations, University of St Andrews
- Professor Juliet Kaarbo, Professor of Foreign Policy, University of Edinburgh
- Professor Peter Jackson, Chair in Global Security, University of Glasgow

On 15 June 2023, the [Committee took evidence from](#):

- Seona Shand, International Trade Director, Scottish Chambers of Commerce
- Vicki Miller, Director of Marketing & Digital, VisitScotland
- Gareth Williams, Head of Policy, Scottish Council for Development and Industry
- Anthony Salamone, Managing Director, European Merchants

On 9 November 2023, the [Committee took evidence from](#):

- Noé Cornago (University of the Basque Country)
- Professor Stéphane Paquin (École nationale d'administration publique)

On 14 December 2023, the [Committee took evidence from](#):

- Catriona Radcliffe, head of the Scottish Government's Beijing office
- Katrine Feldinger, head of the Scottish Government's Copenhagen office
- Christopher Thomson, head of the Scottish Government's Washington DC office

On 1 February 2024, the [Committee took evidence from](#):

- Pete Wishart MP, Chair, Scottish Affairs Committee

On 16 May 2024, the [Committee took evidence from](#):

- Louise Davies, Head of Policy & Communications, Scotland's International Development Alliance
- Lewis Ryder-Jones, Advocacy Advisor, Oxfam Scotland
- Dr Graham Long, Senior Lecturer, Newcastle University

Today's evidence session with the Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture is an opportunity for the Committee to follow up issues which have been raised in previous evidence sessions to inform the Committee's submission to the Finance and Public Administration Committee.

## The current National Performance Framework

The [National Performance Framework](#) (NPF) is used by the Scottish Government to evaluate the outcomes of its policies. The current NPF has 11 National Outcomes. The most relevant National Outcome for the Europe and External Affairs elements of the committee's remit is:

- **International:** We are open, connected and make a positive contribution Internationally.

The Scottish Government's vision which [sits beneath this National Outcome](#) states:

"We pursue happiness and quality of life as legitimate social goals. Our family, communities and people are important to us and we are committed to being fair and socially just. We are respectful of all who chose to visit, live and work in Scotland and acknowledge the positive contribution they make. Our visitor economy is thriving.

We are proud of our achievements and are confident, ambitious and positive about the future. We are regarded as a vibrant, modern country and have positive international relations, influence and exchange networks. We

recognise the inter-connectedness of people and the obligations which flow from this and play a valuable role in providing aid and supporting developing countries. We are committed to promoting peace, democracy and human rights globally.”

Beneath the National Outcomes are a number of [National Indicators](#) which are used to measure performance. In total there are 81 indicators. Under the International National Outcome there are 6 indicators:

- **A positive experience for people coming to live in Scotland** - intended to measure one important dimension of migrants’ experiences in Scotland – a strong sense of belonging.
- **Scotland’s Reputation** – intended to measure Scotland’s reputation against 60 countries across the world on the Anholt-Ipsos Nation Brands IndexSM (NBISM)
- **Scotland’s Population** - measures the number of council areas experiencing population decline.
- **Trust in public organisations** – no indicator has been developed
- **International networks** – no indicator has been developed
- **Contribution of development support to other nations** - a composite that measures Scotland’s international development activities. It provides a comprehensive depiction of how Scotland contributes to international development.

There is also an indicator related to international trade which is relevant to the Scottish Government’s international policies:

- **International exporting** - measures the annual value of international exports (not including the rest of the UK or Oil and Gas exports) as published in Export Statistics Scotland.

## The proposed changes to the National Performance Framework

Within the (now) 13 outcomes in the new NPF, the international outcome is retained. The wording of the international outcome has been reworded with the word internationally replaced by globally. The outcome now says:

“We are connected, open, show leadership and make a positive contribution globally.”

According to the Scottish Government, the purpose of changing internationally to globally is:

“to broaden the scope from a focus on the relationships between nations (‘international’) to wider environmental and social factors (‘global’).”

Beneath the re-worded outcome, the vision set out beneath it is:

“Being a good global citizen is a responsibility we all share. We recognise that we are all interconnected, within Scotland and across the globe. We understand that the decisions that impact our own wellbeing here and now will also have wider effects internationally and in the future.

We are committed to promoting peace, democracy and human rights globally. We provide global leadership through positive international relations, our support for international development and our climate action.

We promote our place in the world and deepen our relationships with others, building influence and exchange networks. We collaborate to maximise the contribution of our research and innovation. We enhance our prosperity, and that of our businesses and industry, through international trade and supply chains.

We welcome all who choose to visit, live and work in Scotland and value the positive contribution they make.”

## **Consultation on the NPF international outcome**

Based on feedback from the Children’s Parliament, the Scottish Government review in relation to the International National Outcome states:

“This national outcome could do more to acknowledge that every citizen, including children, can contribute to creating a nation that is outward facing, internationalist and committed to social justice. Being part of a global family that seeks to make rights real for children we would suggest that this national outcome needs to make more of the phrase which closes the current text, this would mean putting these words front and centre in our national outcome: We are committed to promoting peace, democracy and human rights globally.”

## **Other relevant outcomes**

There are two other outcomes which are relevant to the Committee’s international remit.

Beneath the Wellbeing Economy and Fair Work outcome the Scottish Government sets out a continued vision related to international trade and investment:

“Our economy is competitive and entrepreneurial. We have good international trade, investment and export networks. We are an attractive place to do business. We support our existing sectors to continue to thrive while unlocking the potential of new sectors and industries.”

Within the Climate Action outcome, the Scottish Government’s vision includes a commitment to international climate justice:

“We acknowledge our global impact and deepen our global leadership on international climate justice. We minimise our emissions through a circular

economy that ensures responsible production, consumption and use of materials. Our waste management is effective and maximises recycling. Through our actions we reduce our impact on the climate change that disproportionately harms more vulnerable communities across the world.”

## The National Indicators

According to the Scottish Government, the National Indicators will be revised to reflect the changes agreed with parliament to the National Outcomes:

“The current set of National Indicators are set out in Annex 5. These will be revised to reflect the new National Outcomes agreed by Parliament, and will be informed by the consultation evidence.

Following the Review of National Outcomes, it is expected that the National Indicators that underpin them will also undergo changes. Currently we have 81 indicators in the NPF across 11 National Outcomes, of which 6 indicators are still in development (as at January 2024). We want to ensure the indicator set remains fit for purpose and focussed on measuring progress towards the updated National Outcomes. Therefore, indicator development is required to ensure the indicator set best reflects the new National Outcomes, alongside considering further data improvements from the feedback received through the National Outcomes Review consultation.”

## Points raised in previous evidence sessions

During previous evidence sessions, several different issues have been raised by witnesses.

### Evaluating the outcome of international policies

During the evidence session on 1 June 2023, the panel of witnesses acknowledged that evaluating the outcome of international policies was challenging. For example, Professor Stephen Gethins told the Committee:

“I point out that it is difficult and the issue is not exclusive to Scotland. As Professor Kaarbo pointed out, countries around the world that invest in their international profiles want to see some return, and committees like this one around the world want to scrutinise whether money is being well spent.”

As a result of this, it was suggested that it would be better to focus on strategic narratives when it comes to external engagement. In Scotland’s case that strategic narrative should focus on being a good global citizen.

During the evidence session on 15 June 2023, when asked about evaluating Scotland’s international engagement, Vicki Miller from VisitScotland set out the organisations approach to measurement which focused on spread of visitors across Scotland, spend per visitor, sustainability to reduce visitors travel footprint and the satisfaction element, “which involves quality measures with regard to visitors’ actual end-to-end experience”.

Seona Shand from the Scottish Chambers of Commerce set out the importance of measuring engagement from a business perspective:

“From an inward investment perspective, the business community is really important. When we bring delegations to Scotland from across the globe, they are here to look at investment opportunities, but we also want them to become visitors and to bring family and friends in the future.

I agree with the points about the measurement principles: it is the quality-versus-quantity conversation that we consistently have. If we are bringing delegates across, we might want to spend three or four days with them, business to business, but we always encourage our delegation to have an element of downtime and not to remain in one city in Scotland but to view Scotland as a whole. It is very much about working with other organisations in a team Scotland approach, and talking up other sectors, too.”

Gareth Williams from the Scottish Council for Development and Industry spoke about the National Performance Framework in evaluating international engagement:

“We welcomed the creation of the national performance framework. Our members have always found that a bit hard to engage with and monitor, and it contains a lot of indicators. We have had the conversation with the Scottish Government about the refresh, and we welcome the fact that it reached out to us on that. However, it struck me that it wanted to talk about the outcome and indicators that relate specifically to businesses. Obviously, we are an organisation with a wide membership, but even businesses or business organisations contribute to and have a strong interest in a range of outcomes and indicators. Sometimes, there is a risk of pigeonholing in some of those conversations rather than joining things up.

Previously, we suggested that it would be worth looking at whether the indicators could be reframed so that they were measured in a distance-to-frontier way. I will take the example of the country or countries that are making the most progress on a specific area. How do we measure up to them on a scale of, say, 1 to 100? It is difficult, when you look across them, to track the progress that Scotland has been making. The international indicators seem to be quite diverse and in need of some focus. For example, on population, the indicator is overall population, whereas more priority should be given to the working-age population at this time, particularly given the projections on the increasing dependency ratios and so on.”

Anthony Salamone sought to focus on how the Scottish Government’s international engagement can be evaluated out with a trade and tourism focus. He told the Committee:

“For me, there are two aspects of that issue. I suppose that it is not really surprising, given my previous evidence to the committee for its international affairs inquiry, that I would say that it is crucial that the Scottish Government, in framing its own activities, has strategic principles and objectives but also

targets. However, there is a difference between the existing kinds of targets, which my colleagues have spoken about, on specific outcomes in relation to trade, investment, tourism and so on and the targets or objectives that frame the work of the Scottish Government as an entity in its engagement with other Governments, for instance. There is a question about whether those are worth whatever they are trying to achieve. I am not always clear about what the objectives are, so I could not evaluate whether an outcome is being achieved or otherwise, and it is important to be able to do that.

There are three elements to that. If the Scottish Government has a more strategic perspective overall, there are three benefits. One is that it can prioritise where it will deploy its limited resources, and there will always be a limit on resources. Secondly, it can ensure that its work is delivered appropriately, and thirdly it will allow for the kind of measurability that we were speaking about.”

The Committee also took evidence from the Heads of the Scottish Government’s international offices in China, the United States and Denmark. The witnesses were asked whether an indicator should be developed specifically for the international network which would sit alongside the new [international offices annual report](#) which the Committee received for the first time at the end of 2023.

Catriona Radcliffe, Head of the Scottish Government’s China Office set out how the work of the international offices is evaluated:

“In answer to your question, those of us in the overseas Government offices submit annual monitoring and evaluation returns. Through those, we try to provide as much quantitative and qualitative evidence as possible across all areas of work that we cover. However, I will be honest and say that, with regard to diplomatic and international work, it is not always easy to find the quantitative evidence to back up the work that we do overseas.

As you say, there is not a specific indicator for international work at the moment. I believe that that is being developed and reviewed by colleagues in headquarters. They want to better align the data that we capture through annual reporting, as the committee requested.”

Building on this response, Katrine Feldinger, Head of the Copenhagen office told the Committee:

“Where we have traction in the areas that we work in, the next trick is to turn that into a business plan and to ensure that we are targeting high-value interlocutors and networks in those areas. That is the trick but, as Catriona said, it is very difficult to develop that into a national indicator within a quantitative method. I hope that you will see in the annual report that we are beginning to do that at a qualitative level. I trained as a statistician and can say with some confidence that the plural of “anecdote” is not “data”. Anecdotes only start to be helpful once you have enough of them.”



Christopher Thomson, Head of the United States office set out which of the National Outcomes the international offices are seeking to contribute to:

“We know the outcomes that we are trying to contribute to. We want to be globally competitive, entrepreneurial and have a sustainable economy. We know how we are doing on being open, connected and making a positive contribution and on other things such as culture or having thriving and innovative businesses. We know what we are doing and what we are setting out to do. We also know that our colleagues at home are working hard to figure out exactly how to measure that and fit it into the national performance framework, but that does not mean that we are not doing that work.”

### The objective of international engagement

Whilst being a good global citizen was seen as important, witnesses have also highlighted the importance of promoting the concept of good global citizenship within Scotland.

The Committee was told that the objective of international engagement for most countries is to support domestic policies. Professor Kaarbo told the Committee

“All state actors on the international stage are doing what they do in international relations in part because the international affects almost everything that they do at home. The two areas should not be separated arbitrarily”

As a result of this link, the witnesses said that there should be a clear link between external affairs policy and domestic policy and the day to day lives of people living in Scotland. The Committee heard that given the difficulty of measuring the efficacy of international work, international engagement should be viewed from the perspective of whether its delivering jobs and investment in Scotland for example. In addition, it can be about how Scotland is viewed with regards to addressing climate change and human rights issues.

Profesor Gethins highlighted the approach of other places such as Flanders where the approach to engagement is through multilateral diplomacy and ensuring a presence around international organisations such as the United Nations and the EU:

“I refreshed my knowledge by having another quick look at the Flemish Government’s international affairs department, its missions and its goals in relation to education and climate. I was also looking at its missions for international organisations in places such as Geneva, New York and Paris. For obvious reasons, it even has an international mission in Brussels, although Brussels is the capital of Flanders.”

Anthony Salamone picked up a similar point setting out what Scotland might learn from other countries and sub-states:

“They perhaps have a clearer sense of their core strengths, be it in economic or soft power terms, and of which ones they want to focus on and prioritise; they then take those strengths and build themselves a profile in the world that

allows them access to the kinds of vehicles that promote their interests and values. For example, Ireland, over a long period of time, built the capacity to win a seat on the United Nations Security Council and used that as a platform for the country. Again, that is not directly comparable to Scotland because Scotland is not a state, but it demonstrates that, if one wants to achieve a longer-term objective, one needs to be willing to have a longer-term horizon. Ireland was waiting 15 years to win a UN Security Council seat, which means that it would have needed a high degree of cross-party agreement on the country's objectives and on how it would achieve them across Governments.

In the Scottish context, it is not just about the Government of the day's priorities for external affairs, in any dimension—be it trade or otherwise—but about the extent to which there is cross-party consensus on the core priorities for Scotland as part of the UK and the world, which transcends any one party or Administration.”

During the Committee's visit to Dublin in November 2023, Members spoke with officials within the Irish Government who set out that evaluation of international policies was challenging but that the initial aim was to recognise tangible outcomes from engagement and then evaluate any economic benefits further down the line.

Witnesses giving evidence throughout the inquiry have highlighted the importance of international engagement from an economic perspective in terms of trade opportunities and tourism. They have also suggested that it was important Scotland stepped up a gear to ensure its trading and tourism position was protected and improved. Gareth Williams from the Scottish Council on Development and Industry also highlighted that education was also an important factor in supporting Scotland's international reputation. Representatives from the Scottish Government's international offices highlighted similar priorities but added culture and engaging with the Scottish diaspora and energy policy.

During the evidence session with the Scottish Government's international offices, the way in which Scotland can use soft power to pursue its international policies was discussed. Christopher Thomson set out the image of Scotland that Americans are familiar with and explained how this was used to Scotland's advantage:

“It is about using our way in to talk about what Scotland does. Particularly in the US, when people imagine Scotland—we use the word “imagine” deliberately—they think of “Braveheart”, “Outlander” or other versions of Scotland that are rooted in the past. There is a lot of love for that—for whisky and tartan and traditional versions of Scotland. Through soft power, we bring people into conversations and then say, “But did you know this?”

For example, in the US, we have a huge relationship with the space sector, because Scotland produces more small satellites than anywhere else outside the US. Once we start having those conversations, we talk about where Scotland is now. Those conversations lead us to trade, investment and modern versions of Scotland rather than just the traditional versions.”

Kat Feldinger, Head of the Scottish Government's office in Copenhagen highlighted that the use of soft power can also result in more than just soft power:

"In addition, soft power is often more than soft power. A lot of our work in the cultural space absolutely opens the doors to partnerships and conversations, but it can also have a real impact. For example, we are doing a project with the Nordic Council of Ministers and with the Council of Nordic Composers, which has an annual classical music festival. Next year, for the first time ever, that festival will be held as a joint production with a country, and the council has picked Scotland. The festival is coming to Glasgow, so get your tickets. That also allows us to support that council in artist and composer exchanges.

At the end of all of that, you have to remember that, for the Scottish artists who take part, the Nordics are a market of 27 million people, with a GDP the size of Russia's before the war started. That is massive. The ability to connect that soft power and the impression of the vibrancy of Scotland—in particular, its modernity, which connects really well with the Nordic countries—with measurable cultural outputs, such as having a major event or having Scottish artists booked to play across the Nordic countries, is really powerful."

Catriona Radcliffe, Head of the Scottish Government's office in Beijing set out how the Scottish Government uses social media in China:

"I will talk about the value of using tools such as social media to reach a wider audience here. To take China, with its population of 1.425 billion, how do we even begin to engage and deliver through our people-to-people links with such a vast country? One of the best tools that we have for doing that is our official social media channels. We have three channels that we use here in China. One is Weibo, which is the equivalent of Twitter back home. Another is WeChat, which we use for slightly longer articles. The third is something called Little Red Book, which is a bit like Instagram.

This is just a drop in the ocean compared with the size of the population of China, but we have 250,000 followers on our official Weibo account. We have 13,000 followers on WeChat, and we have 11,000 followers for the Little Red Book channel that we have just opened. Whatever we do, we can multiply the audience by posting on those channels and sharing what we do."

Christopher Thomson explained to the Committee the Scottish Government's office in Washington DC's has six in-year objectives:

"We have six in-year objectives in the US office. Some of them, such as enhancing reputation, are not entirely measurable, as we have touched on, but most of the objectives have measurements against them. We also have three in-year on-going deliverables. We have things that we measure that we want to be better at but, given the nature of the relationship between the US and Scotland, to paraphrase that presidential campaign, "It's the economy, stupid", for us.

We do a lot of work in trade and investment. The annual report highlights the investment that has come into Prestwick through Mangata, which is a US investment that colleagues and I have been working on for years. Those things are hugely beneficial. We see the difference that it can make to people's lives in Scotland to see those jobs come in."

### Cooperation between the Scottish and UK governments

Anthony Salamone highlighted that there was an opportunity for the Scottish Government to work with and benefit from the UK's diplomatic network, particularly in areas of the world where the Scottish Government is not present. He also provided an example of how the UK and Scottish Governments could work together more closely on the international stage:

"I hope that we can have a consensus that it is right for Scottish institutions—not just the Scottish Government but the Scottish Parliament—to engage with colleagues internationally. However, co-operation would require both Administrations to meet somewhere in the middle; why not have joint trade missions with Scottish Government ministers and UK Government ministers promoting Scotland together? That sounds like a great idea to me."

Linked to this, Seona Shand emphasised the importance of the UK Government promoting Scotland:

"There is duplication of effort, and it is a very crowded marketplace. I mentioned earlier that we are export champions in one area and international trade ambassadors in another, through GlobalScots. That is the quagmire for businesses. They need simplification and stability. The UK Government should be promoting Scotland—as well as the other nations, I hasten to add. Scotland does things that are very unique, and we need to be able to forge ahead independently."

On working with the UK Government, Professor Peter Jackson discussed how the Canadian Government works on the international stage with its provinces:

"In general, my view is that Canada—partly this is because I am Canadian and I am familiar with it—provides a few obvious examples of the way in which different regions can be positively supported by the national Government, in a way that I think is happening in Scotland."

During the Committee's evidence session with academics from Spain and Canada, the witnesses set out the relationship between the sub-state governments and the federal government to pursue international engagement policies. Professor Stéphane Paquin from the École nationale d'administration publique in Quebec highlighted that a number of the Canadian provinces have an international presence and engage internationally:

"I should also point out that Quebec is not the only Canadian province with international relations. For example, the province of British Columbia has 23 international offices, Alberta has 15 and Ontario has 12. Ontario used to have

more than 20 international offices, and now Quebec has 35. So, Quebec is not alone in having international activities.”

Noé Cornago from the University of the Basque Country highlighted the role of the Basque Country government’s Brussels office:

“Other delegations abroad have been copying the Basque Country over the decades in establishing the same sort of official representation—and not only in the European Union but in the Americas, too. For them, the Basque example has been influential and instrumental in shaping an institutional official profile abroad.

Beyond that, the Basque delegation in Brussels has done really good work over time. It has a really technical profile, and it looks for partnerships in order to understand all the intricacies of the European integration process, remaining quite distant from political controversies. It has been a learning process—say, a sort of provincial learning.”

Representatives from the Scottish Government’s international offices told the committee about how their offices worked with the UK embassies in those countries. Christopher Thomson set out how the Scottish Government office, based in the UK embassy in Washington DC worked with UK officials:

“I am really pleased to be able to say that we have fantastic relationships here in the US and that I get on really well with the ambassador and deputy ambassador and with colleagues from the UK Government.

Things can happen at home, and in the political sphere, that will have an impact on what we do but, as officials, our job is to get the work done. We have our priorities and we have our work to do, and we do not get involved in politics. We are in regular communication with our colleagues. I am based in the British embassy in DC and have a slot at our all-staff meeting for the whole US on a Monday morning, at which I talk about our priorities and what we do. As a result, I can broadcast messages about what Scotland is interested in, what we are good at and what we are looking to do across the entire UK network in the US, and I frequently get feedback from UK Government colleagues saying, “What you said was really interesting. How can we work together?”

During the second half of 2022 and into 2023, the House of Commons Scottish Affairs Committee conducted an inquiry into “[Promoting Scotland Internationally](#)”. The focus of the inquiry was:

“to examine how effectively Scottish interests are represented and promoted by the UK Government and its diplomatic network across the world.”

The inquiry also looked at how the UK and Scottish Governments cooperated to promote Scotland internationally. The report includes a section on the Scottish Government’s global footprint and also on the competencies of the UK and Scottish

governments in promoting Scotland internationally. Related to this, the Committee concluded that:

“The UK and Scottish Governments share many of the same priorities for Scotland on the international stage and there is an important role for the Scottish Government to play in promoting Scottish interests overseas in areas of devolved competence. Despite recent publicised tension between the two governments surrounding international activity, we found there to be positive and constructive collaboration between officials during our visit to Washington DC earlier this year, where UK and Scottish Government officials are co-located in the British Embassy. This kind of collaboration should be encouraged across the wider Embassy network where teams are co-located. In locations where Scottish Government officials are not co-located or based, it is important to embed regular communication between the teams to facilitate or identify any opportunities for joint initiatives between the governments. We encourage the UK and Scottish governments to work constructively and cooperatively on Scottish interests internationally. Whilst recognising that foreign affairs and international trade are reserved to the UK Government, the Scottish Government have international interests in devolved policy areas. (Paragraph 64).”

On this issue, the UK Government response to the Committee indicated agreement that officials from the UK and Scottish Governments regularly work collaboratively overseas in order to deliver the best possible outcomes, and also acknowledged the importance of maintaining regular communication between teams.

The Chair of the House of Commons Scottish Affairs Committee, Pete Wishart MP gave evidence to the National Outcomes inquiry in February 2024. On the relationship on the ground between Scottish and UK Government officials, Pete Wishart MP told the Committee:

“The first point to make—which Alexander Stewart captured in some of his questions—is that the working arrangements on the ground are fantastic. There has been no complaint whatsoever by any party about how well officials are serving both the UK and Scottish Governments. I know that your committee has taken evidence from a number of the British embassies where the Scottish Government is internationally placed and where Scottish Development International works very effectively with Government officials.

We went to Washington, where there is an exemplar of good and positive working arrangements; the Scottish Government has a pretty large mission in the US embassy. We have an ambassador, in Karen Clark, who understands and gets Scotland, who is personally very interested in what is happening here, and who makes a real effort to ensure that everybody is catered for and gets their place within the whole organisation. Washington is also helped because the Department for Business and Trade lead is a Scot who takes a real interest in ensuring that Scottish businesses, particularly, are well advertised across the United States and that support is given.”

Use of the diaspora and engagement with civil society

Witnesses have also highlighted the importance of using the Scottish diaspora to promote Scotland internationally and how an indicator on that engagement might be developed. Vicki Miller from VisitScotland told the Committee:

“I guess that our ask of global and diaspora Scots is to do some of that storytelling and also to help us connect businesses in Scotland with market opportunities. It is definitely an area where we could sharpen our indicators so that it is not necessarily only about how engaged they are. It could also be about outcome-focused measures, rather than simply that engagement metric, which I think is where we are just now.”

Anthony Salamone supported this approach telling the Committee:

“if we are asking our diaspora or our networks to do something for us or to be a vehicle for us, although we can measure that, it is more important to measure the outcomes against whatever our objectives were in the first place. If they are the intermediary for whatever objective the Scottish Government or Scotland as a whole has, it is about whatever the outcome is.”

On the role of GlobalScots in particular, Gareth Williams told the Committee:

“We would also welcome metrics that are a bit more outcome focused in relation to networks. I am aware that the GlobalScot network has been expanded in recent times, but we have had mixed feedback from members operating internationally as to whether they have a connection with a GlobalScot or know how to go about establishing one. As it expands further, there is a need to, as Vicki Miller said, sharpen indicators.”

Anthony Salamone highlighted the opportunities for Scottish engagement presented by St Andrew’s Day citing the example of Ireland:

“I come back on the point about St Andrew’s day because it links to what I said about using culture as a catalyst. I can understand the reluctance to be pigeonholed in the view of Scotland as being about St Andrew’s day, bagpipes and tartan. However, my point is that we use that as a catalyst, as other countries do.

We should hold St Andrew’s day celebrations but use them as an opportunity to bring business people together to promote the space sector, for instance, as Ireland does extremely effectively with St Patrick’s day and, more recently, St Bridget’s day. As I imagine you are aware, on St Patrick’s day, almost every Government minister in Ireland is not in Ireland because they go all over the world to attend various St Patrick’s day celebrations and use them to promote the country. It is not just about promoting trade and investment, although they do that; they also use it as an opportunity to promote what they see as Irish and European values.”

The Chair of the House of Commons Scottish Affairs Committee, Pete Wishart MP highlighting some of the work of his Committee during a trip to the United States told the Committee:

“The US—especially because it has tartan week and the events around that—probably has the best-designed and best put together organisations when it comes to the Scottish diaspora. That is mainly because they have the task, in relation to tartan week, of making sure that the events are organised and co-ordinated, and that people are asked to come across to enjoy the events that are taking place.

However, there is a real challenge. We felt their real frustration that their value is not particularly well appreciated and that they are not sufficiently resourced to do some of their work. I know that the Scottish Government has generously given a number of grant supports over the years since tartan week has been in place, but people have, nonetheless, a sense that they seem to be doing it all on their own. All of the people are, of course, volunteers. None of them is in a paid position, so it takes a bit of time and commitment to be part of the collection of groups and organisations relating to the diaspora.

They feel that further information is required in relation to how they might amplify the work that is happening in Scotland and promote our many attributes, and that further resourcing could assist them in that mission. It is a traditional image of Scotland that they present, which I do not think will be any surprise. That is the type of activity that a lot of the Caledonian societies, in particular, engage in. There is sense that they are asking how much they could do to promote some of the more modern images of Scotland.”

Pete Wishart MP later told the Committee that:

“There is no direct support at all to the diaspora, other than the small amounts that the Scottish Government gives to tartan week activities. There is nothing available to those groups, so perhaps we could look to build that up in the future. We do not suggest that in the report—we suggest that “better engagement” must be attempted and pursued to get the most out of all this. Those people are the amplifiers for our country—they claim to be Scottish and want to demonstrate and tell everybody about what they consider to be their homeland. There must be ways that we could better support them.

We did not do enough on that to come up with any solutions or recommendations, other than to say that Government should attempt to do that. You are absolutely right, however, that we need to make more of the diaspora. The Scottish Government’s GlobalScot network initiative is fantastic, and it says all the right things. There is maybe not much detail on how all that is done, but those are the headline things that should be done. Getting a bit more meat on the bones of all that might help to address some of these issues.”

Noé Cornago from the University of the Basque Country, highlighted the way in which the Catalan government has worked closely with Catalan civil society on its



international engagement. On the same theme, Professor Stéphane Paquin from the École nationale d'administration publique in Quebec set out the way in which the Government of Quebec works with civil society to pursue international policies:

“In Quebec, there is a Ministry of International Relations and La Francophonie, which is in charge of all of Quebec’s international policy; it is also in charge of outreach not just to the different ministries of the Government, but to civil society. In order to do that, the Government of Quebec has created in academia the position of research chair on different topics, and they can ask questions and organise conferences with researchers and students. It has also created many institutions with non-governmental organisations and, of course, the business sector, not just in Quebec City or Montreal, but all over the province of Quebec. So there is a clear effort to have domestic outreach to help people—and even municipal government—internationalise their activity.”

### International development

On 16 May 2024, the Committee took evidence on the link between the National Outcomes and the Scottish Government’s international development policy. By the time of this evidence session, the Scottish Government had published its proposed changes to the National Performance Framework for consultation.

The witnesses highlighted the importance of the “global responsibility aspect of the international outcome”. Louise Davies, representing Scotland’s International Development Alliance (SIDA) explained that many of the recommendations made by SIDA related to the indicators which sit below the outcomes and these indicators are not being consulted on:

“A key point that we made in our submission was that the indicators are flawed. They do not accurately reflect what we could be doing as a good global citizen. However, the report looks not at the indicators but at the outcomes that have been presented and the vision that accompanies them.”

On the Scottish Government’s proposed changes to the National Performance Framework, Louise Davies said that broadly speaking SIDA welcomed them adding that:

“It feels like a step in the right direction in acknowledging our global impact and global responsibility, but there is definitely room for improvement. If the national performance framework is to be a wellbeing framework, we need to think about wellbeing beyond Scotland’s borders. We cannot have wellbeing in Scotland at the expense of communities in other countries, so we are keen to see that reflected across the whole of the national outcomes.”

However, in relation to ensuring Scottish Government policies do “no harm”, Louise Davies added:

“We would like to see more reference to global responsibility across the outcomes, but in the international outcomes specifically, there are certainly

areas to welcome in the changes that have been presented. It does feel as though there is a stronger reference to global citizenship and interconnectedness, which is positive, but there are still contradictions. For example, the report talks about enhancing our prosperity, but what we want to see is enhancing our wellbeing and, ideally, the wellbeing of everybody else globally. Enhancing our prosperity through international trade could cause harm, so we at least need to say that, if we are enhancing prosperity through trade, it must not cause harm. Ideally, that would be reworded to start talking about things that are not about prosperity but about wellbeing.”

Lewis Ryder-Jones from Oxfam Scotland told the Committee that the level of consultation ahead of publication of the new outcomes was disappointing:

“This time round, the level of public engagement was relatively low, having been slightly more comprehensive in the previous round. Oxfam was involved in the public engagement in 2018. Broadly speaking, however, the engagement on the international outcome at that point was not fantastic. In fact, that outcome was added after the other outcomes had been broadly agreed by the public engagement process. We think that adding that outcome was a very good thing, by the way. It was really important, especially as the attempt to align with the SDGs—the United Nations sustainable development goals—was made so clear, so its retention this time round is hugely welcome.”

On the wider outcomes, Lewis Ryder-Jones told the Committee:

“We also welcome subtle changes to other elements of the framework, such as the addition of the climate action outcome—there was no explicit outcome on climate action previously. Within the extended vision and definition of that outcome, there is a clear connection to the global issues on which our progress, or lack of it, on climate action has an impact, which we really welcome.”

Like the other witnesses, Dr Graham Long from Newcastle University highlighted that wellbeing and sustainable development are linked:

“First, it is clear that wellbeing and sustainable development are linked. We have to understand those concepts as connected. Wellbeing, and the wellbeing of Scotland, is in the background of the NPF and its refresh, and sustainable development clearly has a global component that is inescapable and unavoidable. I also throw in the idea of future generations, which is a term that is talked about in the same area. It is important to clarify how those three things relate to each other and how you develop the indicators, policies and institutions that would do a good job of addressing all those concerns at the same time.”

A further issue highlighted by the witnesses is the belief that the international outcome is linked to a number of other outcomes such as those on climate and on the wellbeing economy and fair work.

Dr Graham Long also highlighted the absence of consultation on the indicators:

“The indicators are important as one bit of the picture. Almost by definition, the national outcomes are aspirational and are designed to be readily communicable, but indicators can track, in a much more detailed sense, what needs to be done to achieve the outcomes. Arguably, there is a role for identifying more precise targets or ambitions, too. Indicators have an important role in the process, but they are not the only element. Behind the scenes somewhere, it would be nice to have a stronger sense of exactly what sustainable development and wellbeing are taken to mean.”

On improving the measurement of performance, Dr Long highlighted a particular area for focus was the measurement of the impact elsewhere in the world of Scotland’s consumption at home though he added that “measuring socio-economic spillovers and impacts elsewhere is quite difficult”. By way of an example, the panel highlighted that rather than pursuing good international trade, the indicator should focus on “sustainable international trade”.

The witnesses highlighted concerns about the way in which the “contribution of development support to other nations” indicator is measured. Louise Davies told the Committee that on this indicator:

“The Scottish Government commissioned quite a lot of research, which was published in 2020. The research explains a really rigorous way of measuring the indicator across more than just the international development outcome by looking at the way that it links with climate, trade and migration. All the statistics are there and were pulled together for 2017, but we have had no updates since then. We have six years of no metrics on what could be a really useful measure. However, that work is already out there.”

The witnesses also highlighted that the indicators should align with the UN sustainable development goals. Lewis Ryder-Jones told the Committee:

“The SDGs have targets in place, which we do not within our NPF. You can take either side of the fence on the merits or not of targets for the NPF. It used to have them pre-2018, but now it does not.

Oxfam’s position is that targets are useful because they drive progress, particularly against the scale of measurement within the NPF that goes from “worsening” to “maintaining” to “improving”. To use climate as the example, if you look at the NPF measurement of climate impact over the past six years it says that we have been improving the whole time, yet we have missed eight out of 12 targets and we have just scrapped our interim 2030 target.”

Finally, the witnesses discussed the link between the outcomes and policy approach, Lewis Ryder-Jones told the Committee:

“We are very supportive of the existence of national outcomes, which supports a journey of moving away from crude measures such as gross domestic product, and the development of a more meaningful wellbeing

economy monitor, which is linked to the national outcomes. Those things are really positive. However, fundamentally, they do not drive policy and spending decisions. There is a complete disconnect between the vision of the national outcomes and the practice that happens—not all the time, but often.

Part of the problem is that, in the legislative underpinning of the national outcomes, there is a statutory requirement to consult as ministers see fit on the development of national outcomes, and a statutory requirement for the Parliament to be given a chance to look at them, but no statutory requirement for the Parliament to vote on those national outcomes nor a statutory requirement to think through how they are used. To echo what Louise Davies said, we probably need to change that.”

## **Today’s evidence session**

The Committee has heard evidence covering a wide range of issues during the National Outcomes inquiry. Today’s evidence session with the Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture is an opportunity to discuss some of these issues to inform the Committee’s response to the Finance and Public Audit Committee on the National Outcomes consultations.

Areas of interest which are highlighted above may be areas the Committee wants to explore further with the Cabinet Secretary. These areas include:

- How the new international outcome in the National Performance Framework was developed and what consultation has taken place with stakeholders on it.
- Whether the Scottish Government plans to consult on the indicators which witnesses have highlighted as being more critical in measuring performance. Linked to this, how the Scottish Government plans to evaluate the outcome of international policies including the likely composition of the new indicators which will sit below the international outcome.
- Whether the Scottish Government has looked at how other small countries seek to evaluate their international policies.
- The objectives of the Scottish Government’s international engagement.
- How the Scottish and UK Governments work together in pursuing international policies.
- How the Scottish Government uses the diaspora and civil society in its international engagement work.
- How international development policy and the sustainable development goals have informed the refresh of the National Performance Framework.

**Iain McIver, SPICe Research**