



Ian Hooper
Deputy Director
Natural Resources Division
Rural & Environment Directorate
Victoria Quay
Edinburgh
EH6 6QQ

Scottish Environment LINK
2 Grosvenor House
Shore Road
Perth
PH2 8BD

Tel 01738 630804
Fax 01738 643290

enquiries@scotlink.org
www.scotlink.org

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Dear Ian

National Performance Framework and Indicators 2011

I write following a recent meeting between SEPA and LINK during which we discussed the success to date of the National Performance Framework and its indicators. Our discussion was useful and prompts me to write and ask about the Scottish Government plans for the refresh, specifically when it is planned and the extent to which it will review the framework and indicators used to date.

LINK member bodies have supported the principle of establishing a unified vision of progress, underpinned by a clear framework for better aligned Government activity, with quantifiable indicators. The current framework falls somewhat short of what is required to deliver true sustainable development. That is ensuring we meet our needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs and doing so in a way that ensures a strong, healthy and just society. We would encourage the government to take this opportunity to address its weaknesses. These include:

- The assumption that GDP represents a suitable way to assess Scotland's progress: GDP does not measure sustainable development, which should be, and arguably once was, the government's goal for future development
- The resulting imbalance between monetary measures and social, cultural and environmental measures of success. This should be redressed by a suite of high level indicators of equal prominence to an economic indicator to reflect progress in improving wellbeing and living within environmental limits.
- Given the above, we believe an economic indicator of prosperity or development to meet our needs would be preferable, together with an indicator that reflects the equity with which that prosperity is distributed.
- The subset of environmental targets should relate to progress in delivering Scotland's Climate Change (Scotland) Act and improving biodiversity. Better social targets and indicators should provide a better reflection of progress towards a more socially just society.

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- The reliance on limited data sets that are unable to inform local priorities and outcomes has resulted in the use of indicators and targets because they are easy to measure, rather than focussing on measuring progress towards sustainable development outcomes.

We would be very happy to submit comments to contribute to the debate. We continue working on this issue, with our sustainable development seminar later this month and dedicated sessions at our Congress in November. The LINK Local Governance Task Force has also requested a meeting with the Scottish Government lead on Single Outcome Agreements, and with Local Government bodies, to offer support with the NPF and the implications for local outcomes.

Our work is shaping our future policy priorities within Holyrood and at a global level as part of the Rio +20 discussions. I would welcome any clarification you can give on the Government's plans for the Framework and its Indicators as part of this work.

I look forward to hearing from you

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Deborah Long". The ink is grey and the signature is centered on the page.

Dr Deborah Long
Chair

cc Jonathan Pryce, Director, Rural and Environment