



Briefing on the National Performance Framework Scottish Environment LINK, Oxfam and STUC January 2017

Introduction

The [Scottish Government National Performance Framework](#), sets out the Government's aspirations for Scotland, through their *Purpose* and *National Outcomes*, and how progress towards those aspirations can be assessed through *Purpose Targets* and *National Indicators*. It aims to provide a clear vision for Scotland and a single framework to which all public services in Scotland should be aligned. It is considered an innovative tool that can be used to guide and evaluate policy and encourage partnership working across government. In 2013 a roundtable was established to review the NPF, focusing on coverage of the indicator set, engagement with parliament, presentation and awareness, and public participation. This was concluded in early 2016. The roundtable reconvened in September 2016 to consider further review of the NPF.

The 2016 – 17 review of the NPF

Oxfam, STUC and members of Scottish Environment LINK welcome the opportunity to continue to engage in the process of reviewing the National Performance Framework. We would like to make four points.

1. As far as is practical, the NPF should be aligned to the SDGs. Scotland became one of the first countries to embrace the Sustainable Development Goals in late summer 2015, with the First Minister stating that the NPF would support domestic implementation of the goals. The global significance of the SDGs means that the NPF must remain a priority for Government.
2. The Purpose Statement should be reviewed. We understand that, as per the Community Empowerment Act, the upcoming review will focus on the Outcomes. However, the Purpose Statement must also be reviewed in light of the revised Outcomes. It makes no sense for an 'Outcomes Framework' to be driven by a Purpose Statement that is not linked to the Outcomes. LINK members feel that the current Purpose statement, "*a more successful country, with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish, through increasing sustainable economic growth*" has justified an unwarranted focus on sustainable economic growth and GDP to measure it. If the purpose statement is to include the means to the desired outcome (as well as the desired outcome) it should include all the key means and not just one. This means reflecting the importance of reducing poverty and inequality while living within planetary boundaries.
3. For the NPF to have any impact, it needs to be used. Its use in developing 'coherent policy' is of fundamental importance – departments and agencies must ensure their policies, as well as contributing to National Outcomes relevant to their area of work, are not undermining other Outcomes. For example, Scottish Government's aim to maximise North Sea oil and gas recovery is in direct contradiction to the Climate Change targets and related policies and is a prime example of 'incoherent policy'. Certain Government departments have embedded an outcomes approach, for example Justice, and it would be useful to review how this



has affected policy development and coherence. Additionally, parliamentarians need to use the NPF to scrutinise performance of the Government. A review of the use of scorecards would be useful to determine their benefits and limitations. LINK members would support launching a discussion on how the NPF can be better embedded in the Scottish Government's policy decision-making process and used to its full potential.

4. There are some areas where we still do not have data to enable us to assess progress. This is especially true for the environment as well as job quality. LINK members are calling for improvements in data collection, especially to enable us to better measure our biodiversity, ecosystems health and consumption of raw materials. For example, Sustainable Development Goal 12 is to *ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns*; but we do not currently have the data to measure our overall consumption of raw materials.

Similarly, with regards to job quality, a better understanding of the nature of work in Scotland today and the extent to which people's needs are being met is needed. Labour market data for Scotland, and indeed for the UK more widely, is inadequate to perform this task, with issues around timeliness, gender disaggregation, and a lack of appropriate indicators reflecting workers subjective experiences of the workplace. The Scottish Government should consider investing in a new survey – similar to the Workplace Employee Relations Study (WERS) – to help establish a baseline and measure progress in delivering decent work in Scotland. Such surveys are not inexpensive but the investment will provide a crucial evidential base to support progress towards a key Scottish Government priority.

At the same time there is no consistent reporting of the indicators already included in the NPF. For example, GDP is reported quarterly and only 3 months in arrears but most other indicators which one might like to consider alongside GDP are reported annually and often 1 or 2 years in arrears. It would be helpful to consider ways to improve reporting to help provide a more complete and timely overview of how Scotland is doing.

We sincerely hope that the current review can consider these points. In order for Scotland's National Performance Framework to support implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals it must be fit for purpose, supported by sound data, understood and used. We ask that it continues to be given the attention it deserves as a tool which can guide policy towards progressive outcomes in keeping with global ambitions and we look forward to continuing to work with you on refining it and raising its profile.

Signed up to by following members of Scottish Environment LINK:

APRS, Buglife, Butterfly Conservation Scotland, Friends of the Earth Scotland, Froglife, Marine Conservation Society, Nourish, Plantlife Scotland, Ramblers Scotland, RSPB Scotland, Scottish Wild Land Group, Scottish Wildlife Trust, Woodland Trust Scotland, WWF Scotland, WWT.