



# Equality, opportunity, community

New leadership – A fresh start

April 2023



Scottish Government  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

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# To serve our country as First Minister is the greatest privilege and honour of my life.

As First Minister I have promised to lead Scotland in the interests of all our people, and I restate that commitment here. I pledge to earn and re-earn the respect and trust of the people of Scotland and work with anyone and everyone who shares my vision of a fairer Scotland. Together, we can deliver a better future.

We live in challenging times. We are still recovering from the COVID pandemic. War has returned to the streets of Europe. Austerity, the £100 billion cost to the UK economy of Brexit, and the cost of living crisis have combined to create some of the most challenging economic conditions in living memory – much of it due to economic mismanagement by the UK Government that is hitting the Scottish economy. Indeed this has led to the Office for Budget Responsibility projecting low growth in the UK and the biggest fall in UK living standards on record. At the same time, we also face the twin crises of climate change and nature loss.

These times call for us to share our vision of how we will face those challenges head-on, while providing clarity on how we seek to build a better future. We must grow the economy, create better communities and seize the opportunities of net zero to build a green wellbeing economy. In doing so we must ensure equality of opportunity for all – reaffirming our commitment

to embedding equality, inclusion and human rights into everything we do.

We will use the powers of devolution to their maximum to deliver services and improve the lives of the people of Scotland. We will make the case that with the powers of independence, we can do so much more to ensure that Scotland will be wealthier, fairer, greener and a more equal country.

As a government we will be unapologetic about supporting those in greatest need. We will use every power at our disposal to protect the vulnerable in our society – particularly as the cost of living crisis puts additional pressure on household budgets across the country. This will mean taking some tough decisions to ensure that we target every pound we spend and invest in order to get the maximum value, ensuring it reaches those that need it the most.

This is a fresh start for the Scottish Government under new leadership.

I am setting out how my team and I will have a laser focus on delivery for the people of Scotland, and announcing three missions that will guide our decision making over the remaining three years of this parliamentary term, and what we will achieve by 2026.

Ours is a vision for all of Scotland and those who live in our wonderful country. We will work with colleagues from across the parliament, in Local Government, the third sector, business, and communities across the country to deliver it – building on the successes to date of the Bute House Agreement with the Scottish Green Party.

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## Our Missions for 2026: equality, opportunity and community

I am setting three critical – and interdependent – missions for my government which will make a difference, tackling the issues which matter most and grasping the opportunities we have, to improve the lives of people across the country. These will be underpinned by our refreshed National Outcomes.

This prospectus describes what we aim to achieve by 2026, which when taken together will deliver upon the three missions described below.

### **Equality: Tackling poverty and protecting people from harm**

Only with the full economic and fiscal powers of an independent nation can we eradicate inequality and poverty. In the meantime, we will use our fixed budget and all the powers we have to reach our targets of substantially reducing child poverty. We will continue to tackle poverty in all its forms and improve the life chances of people across our country. We will protect people across Scotland as far as possible from the harm inflicted by UK Government policies and the ongoing cost of living crisis.

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### **Opportunity: A fair, green and growing economy**

Whilst we are bound to a failed UK economic model and do not hold all the financial levers needed, we will use all the powers we do have to support economic growth for a purpose, to help business and trade to thrive and maximise the opportunity of the green economy, with fairness at its heart. This can then drive improved living standards, reduce poverty, and sustain high quality public services – all key to a wellbeing economy. We will do this through harnessing the skills and ingenuity of our people and seizing the economic and social opportunities from meeting our net zero targets.

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### **Community: Prioritising our public services**

We will deliver efficient and effective public services, including our emergency services, that deliver for the people who use and rely on them. The NHS and social care, schools and childcare, our police force and tackling crime, and delivering affordable housing and transport will be our focus. As part of this, my government will ensure the recovery and reform of our NHS and our other vital public services by delivering sustainable, person-centred public services with a focus on tackling inequalities. The Government I lead will ensure we protect the rights of all our people, and where possible we will advance those rights.

These missions will define the work of my government as we take the steps required to deliver the public services that our communities rely upon, increase quality, create a fairer society and drive opportunity for the people of Scotland and our businesses.

My ministerial team are critical to the delivery of this vision – this document outlines the ambitious range of outcomes that I have agreed with each Cabinet Secretary and the co-leaders of the Scottish Green Party. These are the key objectives that they will deliver over the next three years to support these missions.



## First Minister

Humza Yousaf MSP



# Our Vision for Scotland



## Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Finance

Shona Robison MSP

Good governance begins with sound public finances. The shocks of recent years have strained our budgets and stretched our resources. Achieving and maintaining a balanced budget, while delivering against our three central missions, will be my highest priority and my most important work. Sound finances are the strong foundations from which we will deliver for people and progress the vital missions set out by the First Minister.

The financial situation facing the Scottish Government is, by far, the most challenging since devolution. The shocks of over a decade of austerity, a hard Brexit, the COVID pandemic, and the war in Ukraine are placing extreme inflationary pressure on the public finances. We have strived to settle fair and affordable pay awards, but ultimately our in-year budget is effectively fixed and constrained by UK Government spending decisions and our lack of borrowing powers.

There remain real pressures on the Scottish finances. The funding available to the Scottish Government, with the exception of demand-led social security expenditure, is projected to fall in real terms by 2026-27. It is more important than ever to prioritise support to those that need it most, and ensure value for money in our public services. I will set out more detail on our approach to managing the public finances in the Medium Term Financial Strategy by the end of May.

As the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, working with my Cabinet colleagues, I commit that by 2026 I will have:

- Managed the Scottish public finances on a sustainable trajectory, balancing our budgets through maximising the value of public spending and putting robust policies in place to support and sustain effective public service delivery.
- Used our tax powers to deliver the most progressive tax system in the UK, making tax policy choices that are informed by public and stakeholder views and ensuring that the revenue we generate helps us to achieve the Government's three critical and inter-dependent missions.
- Prioritised our capital investment to achieve net zero and to maintain high quality public infrastructure and services across Scotland.

- Completed the first review of Scotland's Fiscal Framework – subject to negotiation with the UK Government – which underpins the principles of fiscal devolution to Scotland.

Ensuring Scottish public finances are on a stable and sustainable footing will mean growing our economy and by extension our tax base, embedding delivery and value for money at the heart of our public services. Central to this will be overseeing public service reform, focused on delivering more efficient, person-centred public services, that continue to embed Fair Work principles at their heart.

Reforming public services will mean that, by 2026, in partnership with Local Government, trade unions and the third sector, amongst others, I will have:

- Progressed a ten-year programme of public bodies and public service reform that seeks to achieve effective and person-centred, fiscally sustainable public services.
- Strengthened the resilience of our public services and our communities by increasing the number of people who have good, increasingly productive jobs which meet the principles of Fair Work, and who make a positive contribution to our society and our economy.
- Targeted both short term efficiencies and wider, deeper, and longer term reform, including through rolling out modern digital services that are easy to access, reliable and effective. This will remove the need for manual processing, reduce failure demand and meet people's expectations of how they want to interact with government, securely and in a manner which protects their privacy.

- Published a Rural Delivery Plan, showing how all parts of the Scottish Government are delivering for rural Scotland. As well as policies on agriculture, land reform, marine, and our Islands Plan, this will cover areas such as transport, housing, social justice, repopulation, digital connectivity and economic development.

I am committed to resetting the relationship and working collaboratively with Local Government. By 2026, in partnership with Local Government, I will have:

- Agreed and implemented a New Deal for Local Government, including a fiscal framework, enabling better collaboration to jointly deliver our shared priorities, tackle the collective challenges we face, and improve outcomes for people – building on the constructive work already ongoing with our partners in COSLA.
- Delivered, subject to the agreement of parliament, legislation giving councils the discretionary power to apply a Local Visitor Levy on overnight stays in commercially let accommodation, increasing the opportunities for councils to raise revenues.
- Through the Joint Working Group on sources of Local Government funding, including council tax, we will have considered further reforms for council tax building on the joint publication on 17 April of a consultation on the treatment of council tax for second homes and long term empty properties.



Supporting the vital work of the First Minister's National Advisory Council on Women and Girls (NACWG) is another priority. By 2026, in partnership with the First Minister and colleagues across government, I will have:

- Worked with the NACWG to ensure that we collaborate to make the gains for women's equality in Scotland we all want to see.

Finally, to improve how we deliver for the people of Scotland we will also learn lessons from the past. This Government will engage with both the Scottish and the UK Public Inquiries into the COVID pandemic in a constructive spirit of openness and transparency. The COVID inquiries will be central to our determination to ensure Scotland learns the lessons of the pandemic and is as prepared as possible for such events in the future.



# Cabinet Secretary for Wellbeing Economy, Fair Work and Energy

Neil Gray MSP

Dynamic, equitable, sustainable and innovative – Scotland has the skills and resources to create an economy which has these attributes at its core. We must grasp opportunities for economic growth and create an economy which is fair and green. At the heart of a wellbeing economy is economic growth for a purpose, to drive improved living standards, promote wellbeing, reduce poverty, and deliver sustainable high quality public services.

Harnessing and combining the economic power and opportunity of Scotland's rich renewable energy resources, the skills and talents of our people, and the knowledge and expertise of our businesses, large and small, will be critical to achieving this.

As we create a wellbeing economy, we will work closely with the private sector, the public sector – locally, nationally and UK wide – and we will engage directly with communities and partners in the third sector. A key priority is building economic resilience, supporting sectors such as hospitality and tourism that have been adversely impacted by COVID but make significant economic contributions across communities throughout Scotland.

We will set out the case for the further powers we need to deliver our aim of a wellbeing economy, with a focus on areas such as tax, welfare, regulatory levers which are currently reserved and, of course, the spending autonomy to deliver the investment required.

Working with my Cabinet colleagues, we will deliver our National Strategy for Economic Transformation, with a sharp focus on those policies and actions with the greatest potential to grow and change Scotland's economy, expand the tax base to fund excellent public services and make people's lives better. We will

transform the delivery of business, enterprise, and innovation support.

This will require a new approach to the Government's relationship with business. At the request of the First Minister, I will engage widely with business leaders to develop and agree a 'New Deal' with the private sector, for how we will work with business to deliver a growing economy that increases wellbeing.

We are committed to a just transition for Scotland's energy sector. Our focus as outlined in the draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan must be meeting our energy security needs, reducing emissions and ensuring a just transition for our oil and gas workforce as North Sea resources decline.

As the Cabinet Secretary for Wellbeing Economy, Fair Work and Energy, working with my Cabinet colleagues, I commit that by 2026 I will have:

- Supported the creation of more high quality jobs, stronger businesses, and vibrant communities by working with businesses and other partners to raise the rate of investment in productive assets.
- Increased the number of people earning at least the real living wage, working in jobs that meet Fair Work principles, and contributing to society through fulfilling and



increasingly productive work, narrowing the gender pay gap.

- Helped more people, including parents, into work, through employability support, skills support and high quality early learning and school age childcare provision, with fewer people unable to work due to ill health or disability.
- Put Scotland on track to become a leading European start-up nation, in which more businesses are created and grow to scale.
- Supported the emergence of internationally competitive clusters of excellence – including in green technologies, health & life sciences, digital and advanced manufacturing – driven by investment and innovation.
- Worked closely with regional and local partners, including Local Government, to drive regional economic empowerment and ensured that our programme of community wealth building is improving resilience and seizing economic opportunities that exist across the country.
- Supported the sustained growth of international exports while diversifying

into new markets; with more, higher-quality, inward investment, and Scotland's attractiveness as a location for inward investment improving.

- Seized the major opportunities to attract a pipeline of investment across sectors to secure the economic and community benefits from the just transition to net zero, and ensured we continue to tackle fuel poverty, working with our advisory panel, to progress towards our statutory fuel poverty targets.
- Maximised the economic, supply chain, and employment opportunities of renewable hydrogen projects, and onshore and offshore wind, with up to £1.4 billion of developer supply chain commitments on average across ScotWind.
- Laid the foundations for delivering 5 gigawatts of hydrogen production by 2030 and the development of a hydrogen supply chain in Scotland.
- Worked with industry to accelerate decarbonisation and create energy transition opportunities at major industrial sites such as Grangemouth.



# Cabinet Secretary for NHS Recovery, Health and Social Care

Michael Matheson MSP

Scotland's National Health Service is our most treasured public service, and my priority will be to ensure it is safe, effective and efficient, delivering the care that matters and that people value. We know the impact of the COVID pandemic was the greatest challenge our NHS has faced – and that recovery and reform is crucial, and this will be my top priority as highlighted as part of our three missions.

I will lead the recovery and reform of our NHS services, and I will ensure that health and social care services in our communities improve. I will develop a sustainable health and social care system that ensures people get the right care, at the right time, and in the right place.

I will work with my Cabinet colleagues to tackle inequality and reduce poverty, and focus on preventing ill health and reducing health inequalities. I am also committed to my portfolio playing its part in achieving our ambitions on climate and net zero, decarbonising the NHS Scotland estate where possible.

We will innovate digitally and put patients at the centre of decisions made about their care by embedding realistic and value-based medicine. We will have taken decisive action on the causes of poor health including our national mission on drugs.

Building on these commitments and progress delivered to date, by 2026 the care our people receive, their experience of the NHS and their health and wellbeing will have improved.

As the Cabinet Secretary for NHS Recovery, Health and Social Care, working in partnership with my Cabinet colleagues, I commit that by 2026 I will have:

- Reduced NHS waiting times year on year.
- Reduced drug deaths and supported the establishment of a safer drug consumption facility.
- Delivered year on year reductions in waiting lists with new National Treatment Centres (NTCs) in NHS Highland, NHS Forth Valley, NHS Golden Jubilee and further NTCs in development.
- Improved cancer outcomes through better prevention and diagnostics, including expanded Rapid Cancer Diagnostic Services in Lanarkshire and Borders by June 2023.
- Delivered improvements in workforce planning, attraction, training, employment and wellbeing, progressing towards a sustainable, skilled health and care workforce, with attractive career choices, where all are respected and valued for the work they do.



- Improved outcomes for people in primary, community, and social care, through enhanced integrated multi-disciplinary teams, with better digital tools including access to personal health information.
- Sustained our investment in general practice through the Primary Care Improvement Fund and invested more in practices servicing disadvantaged areas.
- Sustained and improved equitable national access to NHS dentistry.
- Delivered the National Care Service legislation, subject to the agreement of parliament, to tackle consistency of provision and improvements in health and social care to significantly reduce delayed discharges, in partnership with Local Government, to improve social care across Scotland.
- Increased adult social care pay to help reduce the workforce challenges our care sector is facing.
- Improved mental health and wellbeing support in a wide range of settings with reduced waiting times for Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and distress and ongoing implementation of our suicide prevention strategy.
- Taken decisive preventative action to reduce alcohol harm, including reviewing minimum unit pricing, and ensured smoking rates remain on track to make Scotland tobacco-free by 2034.
- Continued to increase physical activity through investment in sport and active travel.
- Ensured the introduction of safe access zones for premises providing abortion services.



## Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice

Shirley-Anne Somerville MSP

Scotland's biggest and best resource is our people. I want everyone who lives here to have equality of opportunity and live in a fairer country where they can thrive. I do not want barriers such as poverty or prejudice to stop people reaching their potential. Principles enshrined in our social security system are fairness, respect and dignity – and these should be the guiding principles for our society. I will work to reduce inequalities and promote equality and human rights so that everyone in every community is treated equally, with government policy making which reflects that.

I want people to live fulfilling, happy and healthy lives in a society which supports them to do so. Therefore, tackling poverty and improving and striving towards full equality no matter your background, is critical, and I will work with my colleagues in government to achieve this.

It is vital that we tackle deep-seated and multi-generational child poverty and stop the cycle that reduces opportunity and leads to further inequalities such as in our health. Driving action to achieve our statutory child poverty targets by 2030 and ensuring child poverty is at the heart of Cabinet decision making are central to achieving our mission to tackle poverty and protect people from harm.

I know what a challenge that will be without the full powers of an independent country but we will use all the powers we have to tackle poverty and inequality, build a fairer Scotland, and support those most in need during the cost of living crisis. And we will build the case for further powers so we have all the levers we need to tackle poverty with the urgency it requires.

I will work across government on actions from delivering improved employment opportunities, to increasing the availability of flexible childcare, and delivering affordable homes. I will continue to build our social security system and deliver Scottish Government benefits to around two million people, mitigating the impacts of UK Government policies, such as the benefit cap and bedroom tax. Our work will continue to maximise household incomes, saving money for people who need it most through provision of services such as childcare, transport and free school meals, and providing support to disabled people and carers.

Like many advanced economies around the world, Scotland's population is ageing and our birth rate is falling. Migration has been impacted as a result of a hard Brexit imposed upon Scotland. Our population strategy provides a platform for economic success, prosperity and wellbeing. We want our communities to be attractive places to work, live, bring up families and to move to. I will lead the work of the Ministerial Population Taskforce and give renewed cross-government focus to address our demographic challenges.



The Scottish Government cannot create a more just society on its own. I stand ready to work in partnership with Local Government, communities, businesses, social enterprises and third sector organisations who will help us build a more equal and just society; it takes all of us to build a fairer Scotland.

As the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, working with my Cabinet colleagues, I commit that by 2026 I will have:

- Reduced child poverty rates through delivery of our tackling child poverty plan **Best Start, Bright Futures**, using all available levers.
- Invested a further £1.3 billion in our game-changing Scottish Child Payment – which is forecast this financial year to lift 50,000 children out of poverty.
- Built on the successful establishment of our social security system and delivered Scottish Government benefits worth £18 billion to over two million people, treating them with dignity, fairness and respect.
- Transferred the awards of over 700,000 people from the Department for Work and Pensions to Social Security Scotland.
- Delivered affordable homes across the country, the majority of which will be for social rent, driving towards our 2032 target.
- Published a Remote, Rural and Island Housing Action Plan; setting out our approach to rural housing delivery, including support for community housing trusts, and actions to allow suitable properties, including empty homes, to be purchased, or long leased, and turned into affordable housing for those who need them in rural areas, including key workers.
- Delivered legislation on a new deal for tenants, and new prevention of homelessness duties, subject to the agreement of parliament.
- Worked with partners including Local Government to identify ways to reduce the number of people living in temporary accommodation, taking account of the

recommendations of the Homelessness Prevention and Strategy Group (HPSG) Temporary Accommodation Task and Finish Group.

- Acted decisively to protect lives by assessing and remediating medium and high rise multi-residential buildings with unsafe cladding and by holding developers to account for their commitments to residents and homeowners.
- Provided sanctuary to people displaced by war in Ukraine, and ensured support is available for those fleeing conflict and persecution to integrate into our communities in line with the **New Scots Strategy**.
- Delivered world leading Human Rights legislation, subject to the agreement of parliament, protecting economic, social and cultural rights and established an Equality and Human Rights Mainstreaming Strategy across the public sector.
- Established Scotland's first Anti-Racism Observatory, recommended by the Expert Reference Group on COVID-19 and Ethnicity, signalling our commitment to anti-racism.
- Progressed Fairer Funding arrangements, including exploring options to implement multi-year funding deals, enabling the third sector to secure the resilience and capacity it needs to support the transformation and delivery of person-centred services for Scotland's people and support our thriving social enterprise economy.
- Supported people and employers to navigate the complex UK immigration system when moving to Scotland, through the establishment of a Talent Attraction and Migration Service, and begun to address community depopulation challenges, including through tailored, community-driven migration solutions which support local economies and public services, through an Addressing Depopulation Action Plan.
- Continued to press the UK Government to provide further powers to the Scottish Parliament so we can tackle poverty, and make the vital immigration reforms required to meet Scotland's needs, including making the strongest case possible for tailored migration solutions such as a Rural Visa Pilot.



# Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs

Angela Constance MSP

Keeping people safe is one of the fundamental responsibilities of government and this is the task to which I will devote myself above all others. We all deserve to live in a just, safe and resilient Scotland. By addressing the root causes of offending and continuing to take a public health approach to tackling violent crime, we will ensure we keep our communities safe.

Crime, and youth crime in particular, is at historic low levels. Additionally, the likelihood of being a victim of crime has decreased by 40% over the last 11 years. The successes to date have been a result of the strong and sustained partnerships across the justice sector. I am proud of the progress we have made but there is more to do.

Feeling safe and having confidence in the justice system are fundamental for individuals and communities to thrive and for the missions we have set out to succeed. I will work with the Police and other justice agencies and with my colleagues across government to ensure we are doing all we can to prevent crime and harm happening in the first place, and where harm does occur, everyone is supported to recover.

In particular, I will focus on supporting the work of our Police, Fire Service, and other justice services to ensure we deliver on our **Vision for Justice**, for a just, safe, resilient Scotland. This will include supporting the Police to match their capacity and capability with changing demands. It also means redesigning services and taking forward major reforms, with a particular focus on better serving victims and witnesses.

Aligning with our **Equally Safe** strategy, we will work to tackle all forms of violence against women and girls and bring the perpetrators to justice. For some offenders prison is the only suitable punishment – so we will continue to invest in modernising our prison estate and supporting our prison staff. However, where appropriate, I will also work to continue to shift the balance between the use of community disposals and prison, reflecting the evidence that community interventions are more effective at reducing reoffending. This will include a particular focus on the needs of women who offend.

As the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs, working with my Cabinet colleagues, I commit that by 2026 I will have:

- Reduced waiting times for justice by continuing to provide justice organisations with the resource to clear the court backlogs built up during COVID.
- Supported Police Scotland to have the capacity and capability to respond to changing demands, so confidence in the Police is high.



- Worked with justice partners to ensure that people are less likely to be a victim of crime, especially those from deprived communities or with protected characteristics, and that the level of crime continues to be at historically low levels.
- Ensured that victims' and survivors' voices are heard, that they have been treated with compassion and have increased confidence in the justice system.
- Reformed our justice system, including through legislation, which is subject to the agreement of parliament, to strengthen how the justice system recognises and responds to all forms of violence against women and girls and ensured the process of justice better meets the needs of the people of Scotland.
- Modernised the processes of justice through greater use of digital technologies.
- Kept a continuing focus on both public protection and rehabilitation, and kept rates of re-offending low.
- Continued work to address Scotland's high use of imprisonment, including reducing the proportion of the prison population, especially women, on remand from the post COVID high.
- Ensured that 16 and 17 year olds are no longer sent to Young Offender Institutions – subject to passage of the Children (Care and Justice) Bill.
- Reduced the gap between men's and women's feelings of safety, and worked to ensure everyone feels safe in their communities.
- Continued to support and strengthen access to justice, especially for disadvantaged groups and communities.



# Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills

Jenny Gilruth MSP

I will ensure that Scotland's education system strives for excellence and equity for all, and allows all our children to excel. This is vital if future generations are to grasp the opportunities we know are coming, from the high skilled jobs arising from our transition to net zero to our growing digital sector. Post pandemic, we will rebuild and reshape how education is delivered, for the benefit of all learners.

From early learning and childcare, to formal school education, to higher education, post 16 training and skills provision and lifelong learning for all – the map of pathways that make up Scotland's educational system has never been more varied. That variety is a strength to be celebrated, and represents the different needs of our children, young people, and adult learners.

A modern education system builds education around the needs of the child and promotes knowledge and skills development. A good education gives every child and young person the best chance to succeed in life. I will therefore ensure a strong education system that strives for the attainment gap to close and continues to raise attainment for all. I will also take action to contribute to the cross-government aim of reducing child poverty, by building upon our existing free childcare programme, focusing on those who need it most. I will work towards reducing inequality in our schools, ensuring schools are inclusive, welcoming spaces for every child.

The preventative approach is critical: children who grow up with less trauma, surrounded by love, are much more likely to fulfil their potential and enjoy wellbeing.

As the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, working with my Cabinet colleagues, I commit that by 2026 I will have:

- Built a system of school age childcare and developed a funded early learning and childcare offer for 1 and 2 year olds, focusing on those who need it most.
- Sought to increase the provision of internationally comparable data on Scotland's education performance by re-joining the Trends in International Mathematics and Science (TIMSS) and Progress in International Reading Literacy (PIRLS) studies.
- Continued to focus on closing the poverty related attainment gap, whilst raising attainment for all - using our investment in the Scottish Attainment Challenge to further empower headteachers and Local Government to achieve their ambitions to improve outcomes for children and young people impacted by poverty.
- Delivered excellence in school education through empowering and supporting our teaching profession, putting learners' needs at the centre. Our new national education bodies will have clearer roles and responsibilities to support this work collaboratively.



- Strengthened support for the curriculum and have an equitable, accessible, valid, and reliable qualifications system for all.
- Improved the experiences and outcomes for children, young people and their families who use additional support for learning.
- Improved digital access for learners.
- Expanded free school meal provision.
- Made Scotland the first UK nation to incorporate the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child into domestic law, ensuring we are a country that respects, protects and fulfils children's rights.
- Kept The Promise made to the care community by 2030, by helping families to thrive and stay together where that is appropriate, and reduced the numbers of children who have to go into care.
- Helped all school leavers, regardless of their background, to access the transition support they need to achieve their potential, and ensure every young person aged 16-24 can further their education or secure a job or training place.
- Introduced Scotland's first National Transitions to Adulthood Strategy to ensure there is a joined-up approach to supporting our disabled young people as they make the transition to adult life.
- Developed a more agile and responsive skills system that better meets the needs of Scotland's learners and employers.
- Met our interim target of 18% of full-time first degree entrants to universities coming from the most deprived communities in Scotland.
- Supported and evidenced the continuation of international excellence in teaching and research within Scotland's Higher Education institutions.
- Delivered a national framework to tackle gender-based violence and sexual harassment in schools, and then commissioned an independent review of our work on this.



# Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero and Just Transition

Màiri McAllan MSP

The twin crises of climate change and biodiversity loss are global threats of existential proportion. Tackling them is the collective fight of our lifetime, and the lifetime of generations to come.

We must reduce our carbon emissions, protect our natural world, and achieve net zero – we must do so urgently, but we must also do so fairly, and we must be ready to seize the opportunities this transition presents for Scotland. A just transition means reaching our climate targets in a way that is fair, that optimises the social and economic opportunities of a greener future, and which leaves no one behind. Change is necessary but it must be managed carefully. We must learn lessons from the past and ensure the regions and communities most impacted by these changes are best placed to benefit from new sustainable jobs and industries.

I will work with my colleagues and partners, including Local Government, to deliver our statutory climate targets in a way that is fair. This includes driving down greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to the impacts of warming that we are already experiencing. As part of that, I will ensure that we have accessible, available, and affordable public transport, that our buildings become energy efficient, and we transition away from fossil fuel heating.

As we tackle climate change at home, we will also deepen our global leadership on international climate justice – pushing for bold action across the world and advocating the human rights of those

most impacted by flooding, drought, and other climate related disasters.

The climate emergency touches every part of our lives, so nothing less than a fully coordinated Scottish Government response, working with our partners across Scotland and beyond, will suffice.

As the Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero and Just Transition, working with my Cabinet colleagues, I commit that by 2026 I will have:

- Driven down Scotland's greenhouse gas emissions further – our new Climate Change Plan will clearly set the pathway to achieving Scotland's world leading commitment to be net zero by 2045.
- Set out our plan for building resilience to the impacts that climate change is having and will increasingly have on communities and businesses, in our Adaptation Programme.
- Co-developed a series of just transition plans in support of, and together with, sectors and communities most affected by the net zero transformation, and delivered direct support through our £500 million Just Transition Fund. We will also have consulted on net zero conditionality for significant public sector investment, including proposals to support

businesses in their transition to net zero and the role of Just Transition Plans.

- Continued to support the transition of over 1 million homes and circa 50,000 non-domestic buildings to adopt zero direct emissions heating by 2030 – working closely with the public and business through consultation and engagement.
- Made progress towards halting biodiversity loss and reversing declines, protecting 30% of our land and seas for nature by 2030, including enhancing protection for our most precious marine areas, improved our evidence base on Scotland’s critical blue carbon environments, and have proposed the designation of a new National Park.
- Published and begun to implement the new National Marine Plan to address the global climate and nature crises by delivering sustainable management of our sizeable marine shared space in the interest of the whole of Scotland and in line with our Blue Economy vision. This will enable ScotWind delivery and support sustainable marine businesses to improve social, environmental and economic outcomes in coastal communities.
- Supported the transition to a zero waste and circular economy, having taken forward our Circular Economy Bill, subject to the agreement of parliament, increased the recyclability of packaging, including recycling 90% of single use drinks containers through the UK’s first Deposit Return Scheme, and modernised local authority recycling infrastructure supported by our Recycling Improvement Fund.
- Maximised our water resources through consistent investment in our publicly owned Scottish Water, further improved the water environment, adapting how we manage surface water to reduce floods and creating water resilient places, provided new green jobs, and supported renewable energy production, including renewable hydrogen.
- Advanced towards making our public transport system more accessible, available, and affordable, with the costs of transport more fairly shared across government, business and society.
- Made progress on our target to reduce car kilometres by 20% by 2030. This will include having more 20mph zones, improved road safety and Low Emission Zones in our four largest cities.
- Delivered a significant step-up in investment in spaces where people can walk, wheel and cycle safely and confidently, when undertaking short everyday journeys, and ensured there are more spaces that put people first, not cars, with the development of active travel freeways underway.
- Delivered a higher proportion of zero-emission vehicles on our roads, doubled the electric charge point network to at least 6,000, continued to grow the zero-emission bus fleet, and electrified the Barrhead to Glasgow rail line. These actions, alongside others, will not only help tackle climate change but also improve our air quality, contributing to our aim for Scotland to have the best air quality in Europe.



- Delivered six new major vessels on the ferry network, adapted our strategic road and rail networks including opening the East Linton station and the Levenmouth rail link, improved the resilience of the transport network to climate change impacts, with our immediate focus on the medium term solution for the A83 Rest and Be Thankful, whilst progressing the permanent solution, and continued the dualling of the A9 between Perth and Inverness.
- Continued our leading international advocacy for loss and damage funding and directly supported more climate impacted communities throughout the world with our Climate Justice Fund.



# Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands

Mairi Gougeon MSP

Our land and seas are precious assets that sustain our people, underpinning our food security, and my key priority is to ensure that we continue to act as responsible custodians of them. The twin crises of climate change and biodiversity loss require urgent and sustained action and I will work tirelessly with my Cabinet colleagues to meet these challenges.

This action is vital not just to meet our statutory obligations and achieve economic prosperity, but because it is imperative that we respect and nurture the ecosystem that forms our foundation – protecting it for future generations. I want to grasp the opportunities to support action in rural and coastal communities which are already embracing many of the changes we want to see across Scotland. I want to ensure that our precious natural resources are managed sustainably to benefit all of Scotland.

Working with my Cabinet colleagues and with partners, including Local Government, we will also focus on the steps needed to create jobs, tackle inequalities, strengthen food production and food security, and support repopulation and green skills development in our rural communities – boosting the rural and coastal economy.

As the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands, working with my Cabinet colleagues, I commit that by 2026 I will have:

- Ensured that, through the publicly committed Route Map to transition, agriculture support is delivering increased conditions on Direct Payments. This will better incentivise sustainable and regenerative practice, on-farm nature restoration and climate mitigation and adaptation efforts, while supporting our producers in high-quality food production.
- Introduced Land Reform legislation to further improve transparency of land ownership, helped ensure large scale land holdings deliver in the public interest, and empowered communities by providing more opportunities to own land and have more say in how land in their area is used.
- Created new crofting opportunities through delivery of the National Development Plan for Crofting and reformed the law, subject to agreement by parliament, to support the future of crofting.
- Continued to support six Scottish Islands – Hoy, Islay, Great Cumbrae, Raasay, Barra and Yell – to become carbon neutral by 2040, and shared good practice and lessons learned from this work with all other Scottish islands.
- Published and started to implement Scotland's national Good Food Nation plan, which will set out the main outcomes to be achieved on food-related issues, the policies needed to do so and the measures that will be used to assess progress; and established the Scottish Food Commission.



- Published our response to the 2023 **Land-Based Learning Review**, aiming to help create employment opportunities in land-based and aquaculture sectors to promote rural development and sustainable communities.
- Implemented the recommendations of the **Werritty Review** to license grouse moor management and muirburn, ensuring management of grouse moors and related activities are undertaken in an environmentally sustainable manner – subject to the passage of the Wildlife Management and Muirburn (Scotland) Bill.
- Established Scotland as an international leader in the use of technology for responsible fisheries management through the introduction of remote electronic monitoring to key parts of the fishing fleet, further enhancing our brand for world class sustainable fish.
- Improved our policy and regulatory framework for sustainable aquaculture in Scotland, protecting the environment and supporting a global export worth more than £1 billion to the Scottish economy.
- Taken steps to further protect and restore our iconic Atlantic rainforests and ancient Caledonian pinewoods, and increased woodland creation in Scotland to 18,000 hectares per year, sequestering carbon for decades to come, delivering biodiversity gains and ensuring a reliable supply of raw material for the timber processing sector.
- Maximised the power of our land and forests to help tackle climate change, protect nature and provide good green jobs, by delivering up to 110,000 hectares of restored peatland – four times the size of the Edinburgh City Council area – with 10,700 hectares in 2023-24, an increase of 40% on 2022-23.



## Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture

Angus Robertson MSP

I believe that Scotland's future should be in Scotland's hands; and that Scotland's interests are best advanced through relationships of equality and respect, enabling the governments on these islands to work together to tackle shared challenges such as the cost of living crisis, child poverty, and the climate emergency.

Our vision of Scotland is as an outward-looking nation, committed to good global citizenship, with a strong, respected voice in the world.

Scotland voted overwhelmingly to remain in the European Union. We want the closest possible relations with the EU and our European neighbours based on shared values: human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, and respect for human rights.

So, by 2026 my colleagues and I will have done everything in our power to reduce the damage to Scotland caused by the UK Government's hard Brexit wherever possible.

I will continue to work with my Cabinet colleagues to ensure that our international work supports the delivery of domestic policy goals, in particular seizing the economic and social opportunities in delivering net zero, and increasing prosperity through innovation, greater fairness and a wellbeing economy.

Scotland enjoys a rich and distinct culture sector, valuable for the contribution it makes to our wellbeing as we recover from the impact of the COVID pandemic, and to Scotland's economic and social life and international reputation, including through the major events hosted here. We will build on this strong foundation by continuing to invest in our culture and arts sectors, working with them to increase their resilience and future sustainability.

With my Cabinet colleagues and the Minister for Independence, I will build the case for a socially just, independent Scotland within the European Union, so that Scotland can achieve its true potential and once again take its place within the family of independent nations. We will engage with people and communities across Scotland and provide the information they need to make an informed choice about Scotland's future.



As the Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture, working with my Cabinet colleagues, I commit that by 2026 I will have:

- Built the case for a socially just, independent Scotland within the European Union.
- Given the people of Scotland the information they need to make an informed choice about whether Scotland should become an independent country.
- Protected continued alignment with the vital safeguards and high standards Scotland benefitted from as part of the European Union.
- Made the democratic case for the powers and responsibilities of the Scottish Parliament to be protected and enhanced, including through the power to decide Scotland's future.
- Launched new international development programmes with our focus countries partnering with them to tackle non-communicable diseases, to support inclusive education for those who have additional support needs, and to advance the rights of women and girls.
- Built a truly international network of Scottish Connections by implementing our Diaspora Strategy, published on 11 April.
- Pressed for the UK's early return to the Horizon Europe research programme.
- Sought improvements to the Trade and Cooperation Agreement that materially improve outcomes for Scottish people and business.
- Supported and promoted the culture sector and those who work in it, both at home and internationally, with a specific focus on measures to increase its sustainability and resilience.
- Clearly demonstrated the integral part that the Scottish cultural sector plays in the lives of people across Scotland and how it contributes to the wider work of government.
- Successfully delivered major events that contributed to Scotland's economy and promoted Scotland on the world stage.



## Minister for Zero Carbon Buildings, Active Travel and Tenants' Rights

Patrick Harvie MSP



## Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity

Lorna Slater MSP

# A Greener, Fairer, Scotland

The Bute House Agreement brought Green MSPs into government for the first time anywhere in the UK. Our commitment to working collaboratively on the policies within the Agreement over the first 18 months has sown many seeds of reform and progress. That is why Scottish Green MSPs were proud to back the new First Minister and new Cabinet, following a unanimous vote of support by our Party Council for continuation of the Bute House Agreement, and we look forward to working with colleagues over the next three years to build a fairer and greener Scotland.

Many of the policies set out throughout this document reflect the priorities in the Bute House Agreement:

- To ensure that Scotland leads the way in tackling the climate emergency – in how we heat our homes, travel day to day and use our land.
- To embed fairness in how workplaces are managed, how the housing market works and in how some of the most marginalised people in our society are treated.
- To reverse decades of damage to the natural world on land and sea by helping nature fight back.

- To reshape the way decisions are made – setting out a new relationship with Local Government and offering new opportunities for communities to control their own futures.
- To build an economy which harnesses the enormous potential which Scotland has in natural resources, skills and talents.

Within government we will continue to lead directly on delivery of some of that work – a Housing Bill to deliver a national system of rent control and wider rented sector reform, including giving tenants a greater right to personalise their homes and keep pets; a Circular Economy Bill to revamp how we use resources and deal with waste; transformation of the active travel landscape; a new National Park; consult on Heat in Buildings proposals for climate-friendly heating; and other programmes which lie directly within our ministerial portfolios.

We will work closely with colleagues on shared priorities – from improved rights for transgender people and ending conversion practices, to delivering Fair Work within a wellbeing economy, to meeting our overarching climate targets.

These are the policies which are in the Bute House Agreement. But the Agreement is much more than a policy digest. It is a commitment to a way of working which seeks common ground where there are shared aims, and which builds trust and good faith as core principles. We look forward to seeing those ideas and those ways of working flourish.

# Moving Forward Together

We are already delivering. Since I became First Minister less than three weeks ago, I and my team have already made tangible progress to deliver for the people of Scotland.

I have promised to lead Scotland in the interests of all our people and I believe that delivering the three missions I have set out is the most effective way to make my vision of a fairer Scotland a reality – a Scotland of equality, opportunity and community.

My first act as First Minister has been to build on the doubling of the Fuel Insecurity Fund last year to now triple it to £30 million for 2023-24. The Fund is a critical plank in our support to people who are struggling with their energy costs. It continues to provide a lifeline to households who are at risk of self-rationing or self-disconnecting their energy use.

I have reinforced our commitment to help parents and carers into work, enabling them to provide for their families and to contribute to a wellbeing economy by investing £15 million in free high quality school age childcare for those who need it most. This will provide safe environments for children and opportunities for them to socialise and take part in a wide range of activities. Local football clubs will also be able to apply for funding totalling £2 million to support the provision of after school and holiday activities clubs, in a joint initiative with the Scottish Football Association.

I recognise the importance of supporting energy transition across the North East of Scotland and have committed

£25 million from the Scottish Government's Just Transition Fund to help the region to become the net zero capital of the world.

I am proud that through Project CAVForth Scotland will be at the forefront of transport innovation, with the UK's first autonomous bus fleet taking to our roads in May 2023.

I have set out my commitment to tackling widening health inequalities, with additional funding of £1 million to support general practices in the most deprived areas. This will deliver the care and support needed by patients at the highest risk of poor health.

Additionally, some of our most innovative companies that are part of the £42 million Techscaler programme will now be able to link up with NHS, which will mean that new health products can be trialled in clinical settings. Our life sciences sector already has an annual turnover of more than £8 billion and this will help to ensure that Scotland is the best location for life sciences companies.

Real change demands real partnership. We are at our best when we work as 'Team Scotland' to bring together the talents and expertise of national and Local Government as well as business and the third sector. My Cabinet and I will work in partnership with all those who share our vision for Scotland.

We answer to everyone who calls Scotland home, so it is imperative that transparency underpins our approach to delivery.

My government will ensure the people of Scotland have the information they need to hold us to account. To this end, we will publish annual updates on our delivery against these critical missions.

I look forward to continuing our partnership with the Scottish Green Party through the Bute House Agreement, and to resetting our relationship with Local Government and delivering a New Deal for Local Government.

I want Scotland to be independent. I want that so we can make our own decisions that best serve the people who live in our great country. With the full powers of independence, and the levers that would bring, we can truly grow a green economy, tackle poverty head-on, and create the opportunities to thrive.

For too long we have been hamstrung by being tied to the decisions of another government which do not serve the best interest of our people or our economy. But whilst my team and I work with others to build the case for independence, we will continue to use the powers we have to work for the people of Scotland. Together, we will build a fairer Scotland, where every child will have the best start in life and everyone living in this country will have equal opportunities and be proud of their public services.

My promise to you is to dedicate myself, and the efforts of the Government I lead, to serving you, the people of Scotland.



## First Minister

Humza Yousaf MSP



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