

Dear First Minister

Wellbeing and Sustainable Development (Scotland) Bill

We write as a broad network of people and organisations who wish to see Scotland become a genuine leader in sustainable development. This is only possible when national policies and action are interconnected and interrelated and the economy is designed to be in service of social justice and sustainability.

We urge every political party to state their support to legislation that explicitly prioritises Wellbeing and Sustainable Development together as we face global challenges on a scale no one has seen before.

SDG Network Scotland is a broad coalition of organisations and individuals from across Scottish society. Since 2017, we have worked in partnership with the Scottish Government to facilitate progress towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including facilitating Scotland's first national progress review. Signatories of this letter now want to build on that collaborative action to encourage new energy and commitment to the UN SDGs in a year when the eyes of the world will be on Scotland with global climate talks in Glasgow.

The next Scottish Government, whichever party or parties form it, and wider society can no longer separate the nature crisis and the climate emergency from our production and consumption habits, fossil-fuel dependency and contributing structural inequalities, any more than we can separate the health of our natural environment from our own wellbeing. Nor can we decouple our own economic prosperity from the poverty experienced elsewhere.

To ensure the next Scottish Government does not contribute to making our planet uninhabitable through irreversible biodiversity loss and climate chaos, leave anyone behind or lose sight of what is important in terms of our own individual and collective wellbeing, it is vital that we find a way to make sure we work together in a more joined-up and systematic way, especially in government, and also across the whole of society.

That is why, alongside all our own individual and organisational priorities, we are collectively asking the next Scottish Government to bring forward **a Wellbeing and Sustainable Development (Scotland) Bill during the next Parliament**, building upon the successes (and addressing failures) of other similar acts across the UK.

This legislation would make it a statutory requirement for all public bodies and local authorities in Scotland to take full account of the short and long-term sustainable development impact of their decisions, both in Scotland and elsewhere, and in relationship to each other (i.e., that local activities contribute to global impacts, and global events impact on local communities, lives and livelihoods). The legislation would assist in setting objectives towards achieving all the SDGs, and

the linked National Outcomes, equally and ensuring that doing so impacts positively on communities and people's wellbeing and the environment here in Scotland and globally.

Crucially, this would include a requirement to ensure, minimally, that decisions not only avoid negative social, economic, and environmental impacts here in Scotland, but also have no negative impact on the lives and livelihoods of people elsewhere, particularly in 'majority world' and low-income countries. Acknowledging and responding to our current and historical role in creating global inequality between and within countries is vital. This will require active procedures that ensure access to information, public participation, and access to justice in decision-making.

The legislation must also be linked to the SDGs, existing international human rights obligations and legislation for the National Performance Framework and National Outcomes, ensuring that all public bodies are working towards all of the outcomes, not just a select few. This is vital because the SDGs are the best framework for holistic and systemic action that we have globally, and our National Outcomes are already embedded in the Community Empowerment (Scotland) 2015 Act.

In contrast to the boldness of a wellbeing economy, which is about ensuring the economy delivers social justice whilst maintaining a healthy planet, a focus solely on a narrow definition of wellbeing would miss a big opportunity to build on these existing frameworks while also potentially narrowing the scope of such legislation to a limited view of what 'wellbeing' means.

This Bill would therefore require that public bodies and local authorities set and monitor, with public participation, legally binding targets on all SDGs and National Outcomes, including:

- Poverty and inequality, including gender equality;
- Net-zero carbon emissions (including emissions created by goods & services produced overseas, but consumed in Scotland);
- Recovery from biodiversity loss;
- Universal human rights, linking directly to the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill and forthcoming Scottish human rights legislation incorporating social, economic, cultural and environmental rights;
- Mitigation of climate-related socio-ecological disaster risks, impacting differentially on vulnerable communities;
- Social, economic, and environmental impacts in majority world and lower income countries.

The Bill would also create an independent commission and knowledge exchange network to support public bodies to work towards sustainable development and wellbeing goals across their policy remits, monitor progress in setting realistic and achievable objectives, and review their outcomes. This will require new and better data to measure wellbeing and sustainable development progress.

The Bill should also make it a statutory requirement to create transparent and accountable mechanisms that ensure policy coherence, including through good governance and healthy parliamentary scrutiny, are in place.

With global poverty on the rise once more, the global crises resulting from the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have laid bare the social and economic determinants of public health. Using and building upon existing frameworks, like the SDGs, to ensure a more resilient future is vital.

2021 is also a big year for Scotland, so now is the time for political parties to demonstrate their leadership and commitment to the SDGs. We ask whether you will set your aims high and help Scotland become a genuine leader in sustainable development?

Co signatories

Groups and organisations

500 miles	Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE)	Scottish Communities for Health and Wellbeing
Aberdeen for a Fairer World (Montgomery Development Education Centre)	Highland One World Global Learning Centre	Scottish Community Development Centre
Amazing Creations Scotland	ICAS	Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO)
Animalia Apparel/Animalia CIC	InnerSpace Glasgow	Scottish Environment LINK
Arkbound Foundation	International Development Education Association of Scotland	Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance
BeYonder Ltd	International Presentation Association	Scottish Wildlife Trust
Brahma Kumaris Scotland	Jubilee Scotland	Soroptimist International
Chartered Institute of Fundraising Scotland	Keep Scotland Beautiful	South Seeds
Children in Scotland	Learning for Sustainability Scotland	The Landscape Institute
Christian Aid Scotland	Loch Ken Trust	The Leprosy Mission Scotland
Community Energy Scotland	Mercy Corps	The Poverty Alliance
Community Resources Network Scotland	MYtown MYcommunity Ltd	The Surefoot Effect
Corra Foundation	One Stone Advisors	Transition Edinburgh
Corum Coaching	One World Centre, Dundee	Transition Edinburgh South
Dare2Lead	Oxfam Scotland	Transition Stirling
DigiLoop Ltd	People's Health Movement Scotland	UKI PRME Regional Chapter Local Network Scotland
EAUC-Scotland	Project Seagrass	UN Global Compact Network UK
Embra Collective	Quakers in Scotland	UN House Scotland
Energy Agency	Radcliffe Consultancy Services	United Nations Association Scotland
Extremes in Science and Society Research Programme (at the University of Stirling)	RSPB Scotland	Voluntary Arts Scotland
Foundation for Democracy and Sustainable Development (FDSD)	Scotdec	WasteAid
Foundation Scotland	Scotland CAN B	Water Witness
Friends of the Earth Scotland	Scotland's International Development Alliance	WaterAid
Gaia Education	Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund - SCIAF	WEAll Scotland
Glasgow Eco Trust	Scottish Communities Climate Action Network	West of Scotland Development Education Centre
Global Justice Now		
Greener Melrose Transition Group		

Individuals

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Contact details

To contact SDG Network Scotland's [steering group](#), please email the network's coordinator, [Paul Bradley](#).

The network is an independent coalition, currently in the care of SCVO.