

Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee

Scottish Government's Revised National Outcomes for Scotland

Written Submission from Zero Waste Scotland

Zero Waste Scotland is pleased to respond to the questions posed by the Economy, Jobs & Fair Work Committee on the issue of European Structural and Investments Funds. We have framed the response under the four headers in your letter.

How have the National Outcomes and National Indicators changed?

Zero Waste Scotland welcomes the simplification of language in the new outcomes in response to public consultation. We believe that they capture national aspirations for Scotland, but do so in a more accessible and understandable way. We also welcome the proposed improvements to the Scotland Performs website, and the simplification of the performance framework to improve accessibility.

At their core, many of the aspirations and indicators remain consistent, which is to be expected, and this too seems appropriate. The reduction in outcomes does mean that the selection of indicators is potentially more important, as these will provide focus on more tangible delivery and clearer evidence of success.

Are these changes appropriate, particularly in relation to the marine environment?

Yes, in broad terms. Clearly capturing diverse and sometimes competing national aspirations in a single short set of statements and indicators is a difficult process, but overall major priorities are captured.

At a high level we would like to see language closely reflecting Scotland's ambitious Circular Economy agenda. The Circular Economy is a growing movement, recognised in the SDGs and within the UN and EU more generally. A circular economy would provide economic and environmental gains and support the range of national outcomes identified. Many other countries have recognised the need for circular economy thinking to cut across agendas and objectives to make it a reality (e.g. Finland, the Netherlands). As the first government to join the Ellen MacArthur Foundation CE100 and the winner of the World Economic Forum Cities & Government's aware 2017, Scotland is already recognised as leading the way. Expressing this leadership more clearly within the national outcomes framework would be a clear commitment that Scotland believes its economic and environmental success is linked to the production, consumption and secondary use of products and materials being more circular.

Some specific considerations we would like to raise are:

- To highlight the value of measuring Scotland's carbon footprint and/or greenhouse gas emissions in consumption (rather than simply territorial) terms as one of the national indicators. This approach will better reflect Scotland's overall environmental impact, and be a vital aid to decision-making in achieving sustainable economic and environmental goals.

[Scotland's Carbon Metric](#) already provides a sound basis for this approach in the field of waste and material management, and the different ways in which carbon accounting methodologies might affect decision making, with the potential to support better economic outcomes (such as reshoring) are highlighted in this [report](#). Consumption emissions are reported but these are not national indicators and no aspirational target has been set in this regard.

- To consider the merits in the medium-term of a national indicator or indicators for measuring progress towards a more resource efficient circular economy, an aspiration set out in the Making Things Last strategy, and integral to the Manufacturing Action Plan. Several proposed indicators relate to this (measurement of carbon, waste, and natural capital) but linking these into a specific circular economy indicator that measures resource consumption, accumulation of material as capital stock, and loss and leakage from our economy, would help prioritise circular economy interventions, and understand the impact of changes at national level.
- Under the outcome relating to community inclusivity, empowerment, and resilience, there might be scope to how environmental indicators could reflect progress. Communities and businesses acting to be more resource efficient, adopting localised solutions, or preserving high levels of natural capital are also more likely to be protected against external shocks. The impact of environmental interventions (e.g. Climate Challenge Fund, Zero Waste Towns) on community cohesion directly would be reflected in the currently proposed indicators.
- Some indicators could be in competition with each other but we believe the approach whereby multiple indicators relate to specific outcomes, and some indicators relate to multiple outcomes is a strength in that it highlights all the factors that should be considered during decision making. We welcome the fact that the outcomes and indicators approach would be expected to support a holistic approach to considering the costs and benefits of action.
- Given Scottish Government's commitment to the Climate Justice agenda, there may be merit in explicitly including equalities as an indicator under environmental outcome (and we would assume this would be a factor under equality for the economic sustainability outcome). However, we note, and welcome, the decision that equalities should be integral for all outcomes, so separate treatment may not be appropriate.

In relation to the marine environment, the definition of the indicator for "marine environment" is probably critical to the extent to which this is prioritised, and this is not yet clear from the documentation we have seen. There may be merit in considering more than one indicator for different aspects of the marine environment. For example, interest in litter and material leakage into the marine environment (particularly, but not only of plastics) is clearly critical, but does not capture the full range of measures of marine health which might include other pollutants, biodiversity and so on. There may also be benefit in considering more explicitly the health and condition of inland waterways which are likely to be the channel by which material

reaches the sea, and a more immediate indicator of local improvements from interventions. We welcome the inclusion of access to both green and blue spaces under the indicators for the communities outcome, and hope this indicator would also reflect the quality of that space too (e.g. cleanliness).

Was any wider consultation exercise sufficient?

We believe the consultation process looks commendably thorough. We particularly welcome the systematic inclusion of Scotland's citizens in developing the outcomes, and the attempts to make the final outcomes more accessible as a direct response to this.

Have the Sustainable Development Goals been incorporated into the NPF in such a way as to ensure that they are fully implemented?

We welcome the inclusion of the SDG's and the strong linkage to the national outcomes. We believe this will be particularly beneficial in explaining what Scotland is doing, and why it matters, when Scottish Government, agencies, or indeed non-governmental actors, are engaging internationally in contexts where national targets may not have the same recognition or salience as they do in the Scottish landscape. We believe the connection to the SDGs is another opportunity to stress the salience of the circular economy agenda within the national outcome framework, as the circular economy agenda is explicitly linked to a number of SDGs.

The presentation of these could perhaps be improved by numbering the SDGs as they appear in UN documentation in any final presentation of the connections, as this is how they are commonly referred to by many stakeholders in Scotland and overseas. This would also provide the potential to clearly highlight where specific headline goals are split into multiple aspirations, and ensure these are given due consideration. The linkage between national outcomes and the SDGs could also be usefully mapped in a matrix format, as it seems likely that multiple outcomes would contribute to specific SDGs and vice versa. Again, this would aid engagement with actors outwith Scotland.

In terms of aligning implementation, greater detail on the link between the proposed national indicators and the detailed SDG targets might also be beneficial. For example, there are SDGs that have targets that are not always captured explicitly in the basket of national indicators (e.g. food waste). Aligning indicators at this level of detail is likely to be a relatively technical process, and might not be instant in cases where definitions of the SDG targets are not (yet) clearly articulated, or where the detail of the Scottish national indicator is still under review. We therefore suggest this should be a medium-term objective rather than an immediate output, and acknowledge that any approach of this kind would be less accessible than the current overview. It would arguably be a technical document to accompany the framework rather than the main reference item.

Closing remarks

We believe an outcomes approach is one that can be incorporated at all levels of government, and that departments and agencies should be able to clearly map how

their organisational goals and targets align. This has potential to give a strong shared purpose.

This approach should extend beyond simply identifying outcomes that an organisation or project contributes to, but should include consideration of how a given organisation or project interacts with others in contributing to high level outcomes. It should also consider how an organisation might impact on the other outcomes, facilitating a high level of joined up government.