

**Joint letter led by WEAll Scotland, embargoed until 4 June 2024 at 23:59**

Dear First Minister,

We are writing to you as a broad group of social and environmental justice NGOs, grassroots community groups, faith groups, service providers, funders, economists, academics, think tanks and business leaders united in our support of your proposed Wellbeing and Sustainable Development (Scotland) Bill.

We believe it's vital that we see an end to short term, sticking plaster solutions that do not create the lasting change we urgently need to tackle today's challenges at their source.

**The Wellbeing and Sustainable Development Bill is a unique opportunity to pass world leading legislation. It can ensure the National Outcomes, and the framework they sit in, become a golden thread that ties together actions across government. We believe this Bill can set out a road map for a future where everyone in Scotland can thrive.**

Scotland needs a new narrative and decision making framework that inspires and enables bold, transformational action from government and society. For example, more action is needed to ensure that Scotland's land assets and natural resources, together with the wealth that flows from them, are owned and managed by and for the benefit of the many, not the few.

More action is needed to recognise the role of care in supporting wellbeing and to provide investment in much-needed social infrastructure. More action is needed to tackle the nature and climate emergencies and to empower decision makers to prioritise collective wellbeing as a policy goal over GDP growth at all costs. And more action is needed to acknowledge Scotland's global responsibility and to ensure that our decision-making has a positive global impact

The Bill can lay the foundation for such a narrative and decision making framework. But in order to achieve its full potential, we ask you to:

### **1. Commit to a meaningful Wellbeing and Sustainable Development Bill in the next Programme for Government**

At a time when public finances are stretched, we need an ambitious and empowering Bill to support decision makers to put collective wellbeing ahead of short term economic or political gains. It should provide:

- clear and progressive definitions of wellbeing and sustainable development, that: recognise the democratic, environmental, social and economic aspects of collective wellbeing; centre equity and protect future generations; recognise planetary boundaries and our interconnectedness to the rest of the world; and do not reinforce gender stereotypes
- stronger foundations and duties in relation to our National Outcomes
- more joined up, collaborative ways of working embedded across the public sector

- the independent voice of a Future Generations Commissioner

## 2. Use the Bill to strengthen Scotland's democracy by embedding participation

In order to truly make wellbeing and sustainable development the mission for all of Scotland, every part of the Bill must build on and strengthen our democratic processes, at a local and national level. It should:

- ensure the National Outcomes are co-produced using a deliberative participatory process that has both breadth and depth, for example, through a citizen assembly and proactive measures to engage with seldom-heard voices
- embed participation and co-production as a crucial way of working across the public sector

## 3. Establish a Future Generations Commissioner as part of the Bill

In order to be successful the Bill will require oversight, independent support for public bodies and effective scrutiny. There is currently no agency in Scotland with the capacity and remit to provide this. We believe a Future Generations Commissioner is the best way to provide this support. It would:

- fill some gaps in the accountability of Scottish decision making; create a guardian and champion of the wellbeing and sustainable development agenda; and give a much needed voice and prominence to collective wellbeing, the planet and future generations everywhere
- support the public sector to adopt a joined up, long term and preventative approach to policymaking, seeing an end to siloed working that hinder progress
- provide information, guidance and training cost-effectively by avoiding duplication of efforts
- play a key role in embedding meaningful participation, where those who are affected by decision making are included in it

Delivering this legislation will create a step change in how all levels of government and public bodies in Scotland work towards improved outcomes, transforming lives and protecting the environment for current and future generations. It will create a clear and shared narrative of progress for Scotland; establish wellbeing and sustainable development as the main drivers of policy and practice; help tackle the nature and climate crises; and contribute to global justice.

**By transforming the National Performance Framework into the golden thread of Scottish policy, the Bill would bring greater clarity, simplicity and coherence to the Scottish policy landscape and support effective action on delivery.**

In order for the Bill to reach its full potential for Scotland, it must not stand in isolation from other legislation. Through coherent and robust definitions of key concepts - like sustainable development - it should strengthen existing legislation which already uses the concept, like the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 and the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016. It should also be mutually supportive of new and upcoming legislation, such as the Community Wealth Building Bill and the Land Reform Bill. Adopting a joined up approach, which this Bill promotes, is key in achieving our future ambitions: reducing inequality, reaching our child poverty reduction targets and delivering a just transition to net zero.

You have our full support to be bold in your vision for the Wellbeing and Sustainable Development Bill. We would be happy to meet to discuss our recommendations for this important legislation.

Signed

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