



The Scottish  
Government



WEALTHIER & FAIRER

SMARTER

HEALTHIER

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GREENER

# PRINCIPLES AND PRIORITIES: THE GOVERNMENT'S PROGRAMME FOR SCOTLAND

SEPTEMBER 2007

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**PRINCIPLES AND PRIORITIES:**  
**THE GOVERNMENT'S PROGRAMME FOR SCOTLAND**

SEPTEMBER 2007

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## FOREWORD



This government believes that Scotland can be among the world's most successful nations. That's why we have focused government and public services on creating a more successful country, with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish, through increasing sustainable economic growth.

*Reporting on 100 Days* has already given a clear account of the Scottish Government's early activity and the progress we have made. During the first 100 days, we have taken a fresh approach to government in Scotland – one based on setting a clear direction; on working in partnership and building consensus; and on setting a vision for the future of our nation which has given us a solid platform of success for four years of government.

It is in the spirit of offering a vision for Scotland's future that we have initiated a national conversation on the constitutional future of Scotland. In leading that conversation, we have set out our case for independence and have shown the benefits and the opportunities it could bring to Scotland over the long-term.

Now, looking to the year ahead, I want to share the priorities that will keep us on the path to greater success. This first year will be an important step towards what we will deliver over the term of this Parliament.

A priority this autumn will be to publish the Strategic Spending Review. That will set out our policies more comprehensively, and explain how we plan to invest the resources of government over the remainder of this Parliamentary term to achieve our strategic objectives.

Alongside the Strategic Spending Review, we will also take a number of important supporting measures to put Scotland further down the road to success. These involve the legislative and other priorities highlighted in this document.

We propose eleven items of legislation, but legislation is not the be all and end all of government. These are targeted measures to assist in the achievement of our overall goals. It is not our purpose to legislate – we legislate for a purpose. The proposed bills, alongside the other initiatives of government, shall take our programme for Scotland forward.

This government will continue to deliver by demonstrating competence in our day to day dealings; by building consensus where we can; and by providing the vision to inspire change for the better.

**The Rt Hon Alex Salmond MSP MP**  
The First Minister of Scotland



## INTRODUCTION: THE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

One of our first actions following the Scottish Parliamentary elections in May 2007 was to focus the resources of government on creating a more successful country.

We aligned the Scottish Government to deliver on the five overarching strategic objectives listed below. This involved delivering a smaller, more effective Ministerial team, with five Cabinet Secretaries and ten Ministers – as well as putting in place a much more streamlined structure for the Scottish Government.

We believe that success lies with focusing as never before on working consistently and in an integrated way to make Scotland wealthier and fairer; smarter; healthier; safer and stronger; and greener.

### OVERALL PURPOSE

To focus government and public services on creating a more successful country, with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish, through increasing sustainable economic growth

### STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:

**WEALTHIER & FAIRER** – Enable businesses and people to increase their wealth and more people to share fairly in that wealth

**SMARTER** – Expand opportunities for Scots to succeed from nurture through to life long learning, ensuring higher and more widely shared achievements

**HEALTHIER** – Help people to sustain and improve their health, especially in disadvantaged communities, ensuring better, local and faster access to health care

**SAFER & STRONGER** – Help local communities to flourish, becoming stronger, safer places to live, offering improved opportunities and a better quality of life

**GREENER** – Improve Scotland's natural and built environment and the sustainable use and enjoyment of it

*Reporting on 100 Days* set out the progress we have made so far toward meeting each of these strategic objectives.

The Strategic Spending Review later this year will explain how we will use the resources of government to meet each of the strategic objectives over the full four-year Parliamentary term.

In the meantime, this document sets out the legislative and policy priorities for the year ahead that will bring us closer to making Scotland wealthier and fairer; smarter; healthier; safer and stronger; and greener.

**In summary**, our legislative and non-legislative priorities for the coming year are as follows:

### Building a Wealthier and Fairer Scotland

- We will publish our *Government Economic Strategy* and the steps we will take to achieve our tough economic growth targets – including our target of raising Scotland's growth rate to the UK level by 2011;
- We will introduce our Abolition of Bridge Tolls Bill to remove tolls on the Forth and Tay Bridges, test fairer fares on the Western Isles route and progress our plans to deliver a replacement Forth Crossing;
- We will work with Local Authorities to freeze council tax at 2007-08 levels and begin detailed consultation on our proposals to replace council tax with a local income tax based on ability to pay;
- We will set out proposals to reduce or remove the rates burden for small businesses in Scotland;
- We will introduce our Interest on Debt and Damages Bill to develop fair and consistent rules for the application of interest rates to payments of debt and damages in Scotland;
- We will introduce our Budget Bill 2008 to provide the framework for spending the resources of government to achieve our strategic objectives;
- We will invest in rural business ventures as part of our new Scotland Rural Development Programme, capitalising on our tremendous natural assets and developing the potential for increased tourism;
- We will introduce legislation to enable the establishment of a new cultural development body, Creative Scotland, to replace the Scottish Arts Council and Scottish Screen; and
- We will publish a housing consultation paper including proposals for improving our housing so that it supports economic growth and meets the current and future needs of Scotland's people.

## Building a Smarter Scotland

- We will introduce the Graduate Endowment (Abolition) Bill to abolish the Graduate Endowment Fee for graduates from 2007 onwards;
- We will issue a consultation paper seeking the views of stakeholders about our policy to replace the current system of student loans with a fair and affordable system of means-tested grants. As part of this process, we will seek the views of stakeholders on measures to tackle graduate debt;
- We will set out the details of our new Skills Strategy to put success within reach of more and more Scots;
- We will consult on the secondary legislation to implement the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act, as part of child protection measures and realistic risk assessment for children;
- We will develop positive policies to improve outcomes for vulnerable families, children and young people at risk and families needing support;
- We will consult on introducing a legislative presumption against the closure of rural schools;
- We will ensure that Scotland's colleges continue to receive the benefits of charitable status and we will introduce any legislation necessary to achieve this;
- We will begin working on our comprehensive early years strategy; and
- We will establish a pilot of free school meals for all primary 1 to 3 children in selected local authority areas.

## Building a Healthier Scotland

- We will introduce the Public Health Bill to help comprehensively modernise Scotland's public health legislation;
- We will consult on our proposals for a Patients' Rights Bill including the right to an individual waiting time guarantee;
- We will ensure that NHS Boards deliver the 62-day cancer target from December 2007;
- We will develop our proposals to phase out prescription charges in Scotland; to establish an 18-week waiting time guarantee; to increase the number of school nurses; and to introduce health checks in schools in the most disadvantaged areas;
- We will develop our action plan on alcohol and set out a radical range of measures to reduce alcohol-related harm;
- We will consult on proposals to give greater patient and community involvement in how local health services are delivered, including through participation in direct elections to Scotland's Health Boards. This will lead to the introduction of a Local Healthcare Bill;
- We will introduce legislation to help ensure that, if the bid is successful, the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games set a new standard for others to follow; and
- We will set out proposals for the provision of affordable housing and support for first-time buyers.

## Building a Safer and Stronger Scotland

- We will introduce the Judiciary (Scotland) Bill to modernise the arrangements for the judiciary;
- We will work with police forces to increase policing capacity through the deployment of the equivalent of 1,000 additional police officers;
- We will introduce legislation to reform the law on rape and sexual offences in the light of the Scottish Law Commission's review;
- We will continue developing a new drugs strategy – and extend the most successful elements of drug treatment and testing orders to lower level offenders;
- We will continue to take forward proposals on a cross-party basis to strengthen controls on sex offenders, including greater protection for communities, through implementation of the National Accommodation Strategy for Sex Offenders; and
- We will introduce legislation to reform the current flood prevention law to allow for a more modern and sustainable approach.

## Building a Greener Scotland

- We will consult on legislative proposals to introduce a mandatory emissions reduction target of 80% by 2050;
- We will, as a medium term objective, work with our partners in Norway and the European Commission to develop proposals for a North Sea super-grid to allow us to export electricity from renewable and low-carbon sources; and in the meantime we will seek to remove discrimination in access to the domestic grid;
- We will publish a strategy for low-carbon buildings and increasing energy efficiency through building regulations;
- We will consult on the proposed Scottish marine legislation, involving all relevant users including the fishing industry;
- We will continue to preserve our habitats and our rich biodiversity – and promote the active enjoyment of them for health, recreation and education;
- We will help local authorities plan for more sustainable places, and encourage good design in buildings that take forward the best of Scotland’s culture and design heritage; and
- We will consult on, and develop, our strategy for increasing recycling and other measures to move towards a zero-waste society.



## A WEALTHIER AND FAIRER SCOTLAND

This government has no doubt Scotland can be wealthier and fairer. Increasing the living standards of people across Scotland, especially the most disadvantaged, is central to our actions this year and in the future. On the economy, as in other areas, it is our intention to govern effectively and in partnership with Parliament.

We believe that Scotland can match the success of similar countries – Ireland to our west, Iceland to our north and Norway to our east, nations that sit at the top of world wealth league tables and form an arc of prosperity around our shores. Scotland has important lessons to learn from each of these neighbours in terms of competitiveness, investment and economic growth and it is this government's job to offer a vision for Scotland that enables us to match, and we hope exceed, their achievements.

Over the last generation, Scotland's economy has underachieved. Our growth has been unspectacular and certainly disappointing by international standards, averaging just 1.8% over the past 30 years – roughly half of the average rate of growth for small independent European countries.

We believe that Scotland, with its tremendous assets – not least its well educated and innovative people – is capable of achieving much more. That is why we have put sustainable economic growth at the heart of our programme for government.

It is time Scotland's economy and society flourished, and the measures we will take in this Parliamentary year are designed to create the conditions which will allow Scotland to achieve greater success.

Our approach involves:

- Creating an attractive business climate that delivers a competitive edge and more Scots in better paid jobs;
- Creating greater fairness and more opportunities for people in all parts of Scotland to share fairly in the greater national prosperity; and
- Enhancing the key building blocks for faster, more sustainable economic growth, including education, transport, planning and housing.

As a start, we will publish our Economic Strategy for Scotland, with challenging and achievable targets.

For example, our ambition for this Parliament is to raise Scotland's growth rate to the UK level by 2011. The *Government Economic Strategy* will detail the steps we will take to achieve this and other targets around competitiveness, productivity, population and business growth.

During our first 100 days in government, we took a number of important first steps that will set strong foundations for future Scottish success:

- We established a Council of Economic Advisers to bring together international experts of the highest calibre to help us develop our *Government Economic*

*Strategy.* This will provide the vision and the practical measures needed to break the cycle of underperformance in the Scottish economy. The first meeting of the Council will take place on September 21st;

- We began work on our proposals for fairer local taxation. Across the political spectrum in Scotland, there is consensus that a fairer form of local taxation is needed and we have made clear our intention to work with local authorities to freeze council tax at 2007-08 levels;
- We confirmed to Parliament our intention to deliver lower taxes for small businesses in Scotland, freeing the companies that sit at the heart of our local economies to flourish and grow;
- We began work on a Saltire Prize to fully recognise and reward Scotland's next generation of talented scientists and innovators and inspire our young people; and
- We published our national conversation on the future constitutional position of Scotland and, as part of that, we set out the benefits to Scotland's economy that we believe independence would bring.

In the year ahead, alongside our Strategic Spending Review setting out our more detailed plans for using the resources of government, we will bring these important supporting measures before Parliament for discussion and approval. We believe that, by working together in this way, we can deliver the sort of economic progress that will put Scotland firmly on a course for long-term success:

- We will build on our work to simplify the public sector delivery landscape

and, in particular, we will announce practical measures to refocus the work of the enterprise agencies. This will give the enterprise network better strategic direction and make it easier for businesses to get the practical help they need;

- We will encourage quicker and simpler business regulation – not least by creating a single environment and rural service to businesses who have dealings with SEPA, SNH and other regulatory bodies;
- We will publish a consultation paper including proposals for improving Scotland's housing so that it supports economic growth and meets the current and future needs of Scotland's people. We have already announced the intention to pursue the creation of a Housing Support Fund to lever-in private finance to support first-time buyers;
- We will introduce legislation to remove tolls on the Forth and Tay Bridges, delivering a welcome boost to the economies of Tayside and Fife; and will move forward with plans to deliver a replacement Forth Crossing. We will also explore ways of creating greater economic opportunity in the Western Isles and other remote parts of Scotland through reduced ferry fares;
- We will continue to support and improve our creative sector. Culture is good for Scotland in many ways, not least in terms of generating jobs and income for our economy. We agree with the planned proposals to enable the establishment of a new cultural development body, Creative Scotland, to replace the Scottish Arts Council and Scottish Screen. We believe this

measure will be important for supporting a stronger creative sector in Scotland and we will, therefore, introduce legislation in the spring;

- We will ensure that the work of Creative Scotland will be informed by what emerges from the Scottish Broadcasting Commission, which we recently announced. We are clear that good links must be created and maintained between the creative industries and broadcasting;
- We will implement a £1.6bn programme to support business ventures and other ways of developing and diversifying the economy of Scotland's rural areas, while making those areas attractive for visitors and for those who live there;
- We will continue to develop Scotland's international aid programme in conjunction with the Scottish agencies and also continue to raise Scotland's overall international profile;
- We will begin detailed consultation on our proposals to replace council tax with a local income tax based on ability to pay;
- Later this year, we will set out proposals in the Strategic Spending Review to reduce or remove the rates burden for small businesses in Scotland. There has long been a consensus that the current system is unjust for business and the adjustments we will make to the system will create new opportunities for small businesses across Scotland;
- We will also introduce legislation later in the Parliamentary year to develop fair and consistent rules for the application of interest rates to payments of debt and damages in Scotland. This follows

from recommendations made by the Scottish Law Commission and will reform an area of law that currently dates back to the 19th Century;

- We will introduce the annual legislation necessary to give statutory authority to the Scottish Government to spend money out of the Scottish Consolidated Fund in the next financial year. This will set the framework for progress and improvement across all our strategic objectives and, in the likely tight financial environment that will follow the UK Government's Comprehensive Spending Review, will demonstrate how this government will best use our resources to benefit Scotland and the Scottish people; and
- We will continue to promote social cohesion within Scotland as part of the 'One Scotland' campaign. This will include efforts to achieve equality of life chances and equality of opportunity to share in Scotland's success between various communities and faith groups.

This package of measures for the coming year will help put us further on track to becoming a wealthier and fairer Scotland.

Scotland's people have the talent, the ingenuity and the ability to compete effectively in increasingly global markets and therefore to grow national prosperity. Scotland's towns, cities and rural areas have huge economic potential. Our job as a government and Parliament is to create the best possible environment for business and personal success that improves the lives of individuals and families across all of Scotland. With this vision in mind, we will continue to move forward together so that Scotland flourishes in the decades to come.

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## A SMARTER SCOTLAND

We believe that people in Scotland can be provided with more opportunities to succeed.

We are ambitious about the part Scotland can play in a fast-changing global economy. We believe there is a great deal more we can do to exploit our advantages in knowledge and innovation and to tap into the potential talent available to us. We will ensure a smarter Scotland by expanding opportunities for Scots to succeed at every stage of life – from nurture through to life long learning – ensuring higher and more widely shared achievements for all.

Bringing about a smarter Scotland will, of course, help to ensure that people have better employment prospects and that, in turn, will strengthen our economy. Opening up opportunity to more people will also help to combat poverty and its associated problems, moving us toward a fairer and more inclusive society.

We believe that Scotland needs:

- A highly skilled, adaptable workforce with the knowledge and attitudes required for a growing, competitive economy;
- A healthy science and research base;
- Young people provided with the education needed to succeed; and
- Learning opportunities throughout life for all.

During our first 100 days in government, we have laid the foundations for a smarter Scotland:

- We published the consultation on the abolition of the graduate endowment fee for graduates;
- We started the process of driving down class sizes and providing access to a nursery teacher for all children, particularly in deprived areas, by providing funding for an extra 300 teachers from August 2007;
- We have created 250 more teacher training places from August 2007;
- We have increased entitlement to pre-school education from August 2007;
- We provided capital funding of £40m for school buildings to enable councils to plan investment from August 2007;
- We have ensured that asylum children who have been here for at least 3 years will have the same access as Scottish children to full-time further and higher education; and we are moving to improve access to nursery education for the children of asylum seekers; and
- We provided funding for a package of training, information and other support for foster and kinship carers.

In the year ahead, we will build on this progress and set in place relevant legislation and policy priorities to enable more Scots to succeed:

- We have already made clear our belief that access to further and higher education should be based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay. Therefore, in the autumn, we will introduce a Bill to abolish the Graduate Endowment Fee. This measure will immediately benefit around 50,000 students who will no longer be asked to pay almost £2,300 after graduation. Not only that, but each and every student studying at university in the years ahead will no longer be saddled with this burden. This is a major step towards our aim of tackling student and graduate debt;
- We will issue a consultation paper seeking the views of stakeholders about our policy to replace the current system of student loans with a fair and affordable system of means-tested grants. As part of this process we will seek the views of stakeholders on measures to tackle graduate debt;
- We will launch a consultation on those key policy areas supporting the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007 Regulations. This will include retrospective checking, fees, determination procedures and definition of protected adults. In the first half of 2008 we will be consulting on the main Regulations themselves;
- We will consult on proposals to introduce a legislative presumption against the closure of rural schools; and
- We will introduce any legislation which is necessary to support a decision that the charitable status of colleges should be retained.

As well as legislative measures, we have a number of policy priorities this year that will help take us further down the road toward a smarter Scotland:

- We will progress our wider plans around student support in the context of the Strategic Spending Review;
- We will set out the details of our new Skills Strategy which, as well as contributing to our effort to build a wealthier and fairer Scotland, will contribute to our efforts to put success within reach of more and more Scots. Scotland needs both a skilled population and an economy and society that makes full and productive use of these skills. The strategy will address both the supply of skills (recognising the importance of developing skills at all levels), as well as the demand for skills (recognising the importance of employers that demand, value and make best use of their workforce's skills);

- We will develop our plans regarding the science and innovation strategy, developing a vision for supporting science to help support the economy, our people and our quality of life;
- We will support progress towards a modern Scottish curriculum fit for the 21st Century. Given its importance to the economy, science is being considered early in the ongoing review of curriculum materials and we look forward to the proposed release in the autumn of Learning and Teaching Scotland's science and numeracy work. Engaging with the profession, we will help ensure that the curriculum will deliver the right mix of opportunities for all our children, whatever path they choose to take. We believe that education today must begin to focus more on personalising learning to enable children to fulfil their individual potential;
- We will begin working on the development of a long term and comprehensive early years strategy. We believe that a child's first few years are particularly important, even more so in communities where opportunities are limited by other factors, and this strategy will be aimed at giving every child in Scotland the best start in life;
- We will establish a pilot of free school meals for all primary 1 to 3 children in selected local authority areas; and
- We will ensure that vulnerable children and young people are enabled to aspire and achieve. We will implement positive policies to provide the right support at the right time to ensure improved outcomes for vulnerable families, children and young people at risk and families needing support. For example, our forthcoming fostering and kinship care strategy will focus on building the capacity and quality of foster care, as well as promoting the role of foster carers in supporting birth families to stay together. It will also ensure improved support for kinship carers to reflect their important role.

Together, this represents a comprehensive series of actions that will enable us to work with those within the children's services, young people and higher and further education systems – as well as others in Parliament and beyond – to fully develop the people and talent that we have in Scotland.

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## A HEALTHIER SCOTLAND

Scotland can be healthier, with the benefits of that better health felt in a higher quality of life for families and communities across the country.

We believe that effective health policy is as much about preventing ill-health as treating it. That is why we will ensure a sharper focus on improving public health and reducing inequalities, as well as on ensuring good quality and timely treatment and care.

Improving our nation's health is undoubtedly a significant challenge. The facts tell their own story. We need to accelerate the rate of improvement in the health of the people of Scotland generally, but also address much more effectively the growing disparity in health and life expectancy between the richest and poorest in our country.

This government has already taken some decisive steps toward helping people sustain and improve their health – especially in disadvantaged communities – and to ensure better, local and faster access to health care.

By continuing to make progress towards this objective, we will also go some way to meeting our commitments in other areas too. For example, if Scotland's people are healthier, they will be much more likely to make a contribution to growing our economy, and therefore to the achievement of our related objective of making our nation wealthier and fairer.

Our approach to improving Scotland's health involves:

- Improving our patients' experience of care, with both patients and their carers being involved in the design and delivery of care provided as locally as possible. Central to this process will be consultation on the introduction of a Patients' Rights Bill designed to achieve a balanced relationship between health care providers and the patients who use NHS services;
- Securing best value from our investment by maximising efficiency and productivity;
- Encouraging everybody to take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing;
- Tackling health inequalities, with a sharper focus on identifying at-risk communities and people with multiple and complex needs;
- Working in partnership to extend the provision of anticipatory care and improve services for people at greatest risk of ill health and those with long-term conditions;
- Focusing on early intervention to give children the best possible start in life and tackle early the risk factors that lead to ill-health in later life; and
- Ensuring continuous improvement of services, with a determined focus on patient safety and shorter waiting times.

During our first 100 days in government, we have taken a number of important steps toward making Scotland healthier:

- We announced the continuation of A&E services at Ayr and Monklands hospitals, reversing the previous administration's decision to close these services;
- We launched a national discussion, *Better Health, Better Care*, to identify future priorities for health and wellbeing and develop an action plan to meet our strategic objective;
- We proposed independent scrutiny of key NHS service change proposals, to help give individuals and communities confidence that proposals will be rigorously reviewed and their interests taken fully into account;
- We announced our commitment to a new 18-week waiting time guarantee, covering the entire patient pathway from referral by a GP to admission to hospital, by the end of 2011 – as well as confirming the abolition of hidden waiting lists by the end of 2007;
- We have begun discussions with NHS Boards and the BMA to increase flexibility and improve the delivery of out-of-hours services and we have encouraged the localisation of NHS 24;
- We established a Ministerial Task Force to refresh our approach to tackling health inequalities;
- We made clear to NHS Boards that we expect them to deliver the 62-day cancer target from December 2007; and
- We established the Sutherland Review to look at the funding of free personal care.

Of course, improving our health is a long-term challenge. However, in the Parliamentary year ahead, this government will bring forward a number of proposals, some of which will involve legislation, for discussion and approval so that we can continue to put Scotland on the road to better health:

- We will begin the process of comprehensively modernising Scotland's public health legislation. This is currently set out in a number of Acts dating back to 1897 and is therefore no longer fit for the modern public health challenges we face;
- We will ensure that our comprehensive health strategy – to be published by the year end – will equip the health service for the challenges of the future: an ageing population; a growth in long term conditions; and widening health inequalities. The strategy will also inform our approach to the delivery of key commitments such as the phasing out of prescription charges; the setting of the binding 18-week waiting time guarantee; more flexible access to primary care, including GP appointments; the raising of the legal age for buying tobacco from 16 to 18; and the introduction of health checks in schools, starting in the most disadvantaged areas. We will present the secondary legislation on several of these measures as it is required;
- We will consult on our proposals for a Patients' Rights Bill which will bring greater accountability to our health service, give patients more rights and give legal effect to waiting time guarantees;

- We will consult on proposals to give greater patient and community involvement in how local health services are delivered, including through participation in direct elections to Scotland's Health Boards. This will lead to the introduction of a Local Healthcare Bill;
- We will treat the misuse of alcohol in Scotland as one of the most significant challenges that we face; not just in terms of the health implications but also its close association to issues such as violent crime. Therefore, over the coming year, we will develop our action plan on alcohol and set out a radical range of measures to reduce alcohol-related harm;
- We will continue to give our support to Glasgow's 2014 Commonwealth Games Bid, both as a means to promote Scotland on the world stage and as a way of providing the facilities and the inspiration to get more Scots physically active. Should the bid be successful this autumn, we will introduce legislation to Parliament to help ensure Glasgow 2014 is the most successful Games yet;
- We are examining the Emergency Workers Act, with a view to enhancing the protection provided and extending it to vulnerable health workers and primary care staff; and
- We will bring forward a comprehensive series of measures on housing, including proposals for reform of the social housing sector so that it is better placed to meet the needs of tenants. We believe that everyone in Scotland should be able to have a secure, warm home at a cost they can afford – and, further, that there is a clear link between a healthy community and the availability of decent quality of housing for all.

In the Parliamentary year ahead, we will also publish our Strategic Spending Review which will set out in much more detail our plans to achieve a healthier Scotland through making the best and most effective use of the resources we have.

Over the coming year, we will continue to improve our health and wellbeing as a nation. Across the political spectrum there is already consensus about the health challenges that face us, as well as broad agreement about what needs to be done.

By working with others across Parliament, and by continuing to make the case to agree collectively on the deep roots of some of these issues, this SNP government will make more progress over the year ahead, and begin to put Scotland further on the path to a healthier future.

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## A SAFER AND STRONGER SCOTLAND

We believe that Scottish families and communities can be safer. That is why we are focused as never before on improving housing and neighbourhoods, fighting crime, reducing the fear of crime and on making Scotland's communities safer.

We want to create safe physical environments with better quality housing and cohesive communities that look out for one another. We want communities to be supported by a more visible police presence to help reassure communities and deter criminals. We also want to see a justice system that tackles crime and brings perpetrators to justice quickly and effectively; provides punishments that fit the crime; has mechanisms for reducing re-offending while protecting the rest of society; and properly supports victims and witnesses.

However, having a swift and effective justice system is not enough. We know that children who are born into some of our more deprived areas and into unsupportive families stand a much greater chance of offending in later life.

We must also take responsibility for all our communities and seriously address the issues that are too often the driving force behind, but never a justification for, crime and anti-social behaviour – drink, drugs and deprivation. Our most disadvantaged communities suffer disproportionately the impacts of crime and disorder.

We must work with others, including the voluntary or third sector which plays a vital role in so many areas of Scotland, to reduce poverty and inequality, regenerate communities and encourage opportunities for all.

During our first 100 days in government, we demonstrated progress across a number of these areas. For example:

- We have initiated negotiations with Westminster on the transfer of responsibilities for firearms legislation to the Scottish Parliament. If agreement is reached, we would introduce legislation this year;
- We announced plans to make early progress on reforming and revitalising community sentences;
- We began to review the law to ensure that alcohol is not seen as a mitigating factor in crimes;
- We began consultation on a new role for communities in the process of applying for anti-social behaviour orders and in reviewing the anti-social behaviour strategy to see where it can be strengthened and improved;
- We announced our intention to exempt a person's main home from the new court enforcement process of land attachment. This ensures the new measure will not result in an increase in homelessness; and

- We announced plans for a new publicly-run prison to be built in the Peterhead area to replace existing facilities both there and in Aberdeen. We also announced that we would suspend and then restart the procurement process for the planned replacement prison at Bishopbriggs, so that it would remain within the public sector.

In the year ahead, we will continue to make positive progress by taking forward a number of proposals, combining both legislation and non-legislative approaches, for discussion and debate to make Scotland safer and stronger. For example:

- We will introduce legislation to improve the justice system by modernising the arrangements for the judiciary, and strengthening their role through greater authority over the Court Service;
- We will work with police forces to increase policing capacity by the equivalent of 1,000 additional police officers, providing a visible and identifiable presence in Scotland's communities;
- We will introduce legislation to reform the law on rape and sexual offences in the light of the Scottish Law Commission's review;
- We will continue building a national consensus around a new drugs strategy. We are committed to extending the most successful elements of drug treatment and testing orders to lower level offenders to help break the link between addictions and crime;
- We will continue to take forward proposals on a cross-party basis to strengthen controls on sex offenders, including greater protection for communities through implementation of the National Accommodation Strategy for Sex Offenders;
- We will continue to develop a coherent policy on punishment and prisons. As part of this, we will work in partnership to develop tougher community penalties. Tough and effective community penalties will help to reduce the number of petty criminals in our prisons and help to divert them from getting started on a life of crime. Should primary legislation be required to enact these plans, we will present a Criminal Justice Bill at the appropriate time. We will also be announcing the membership and remit of the recently agreed Prisons Commission to look at the purpose of prison in a modern Scotland;

- We will consult on proposals to broaden the range of options to resolve disputes, and develop a modern arbitration system in Scotland;
- We will introduce legislation to reform the current flood prevention laws, which date from 1961. The primary focus on building large-scale flood prevention schemes is no longer flexible enough to address the situations we face in Scotland today. More sustainable measures are now available which can help reduce water flows. The new legislation, on which we will consult widely, will allow for a more modern and sustainable approach that will help to provide longer-term solutions to reduce flooding threats; and
- We will also continue our efforts to give people a greater say about issues which impact upon them and to give them more responsibility for decisions which affect their local communities.

Later this year, we will publish our Strategic Spending Review which will set out in more detail our plans to achieve a safer and stronger Scotland.

Together this represents a comprehensive series of actions that will enable us to work with communities, those within the justice system and others in Parliament and beyond to improve neighbourhoods, reduce crime and its causes, and to make our communities safer and stronger.

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## A GREENER SCOTLAND

We believe passionately that there can be a better future for Scotland's built and natural environment.

We will achieve a greener Scotland by improving our natural and built environments, and the sustainable use and enjoyment of these.

Scotland is facing a number of pressures in terms of its environment. The way in which we respond to these pressures will be critical to whether we can become a modern, successful economy, with a good quality of life to retain and attract talented people.

Some pressures are global, such as the increasing impact of climate change. Others are related to changing patterns in the way we live and work, such as the increase in solo-living and the demand this creates for additional housing and infrastructure, increased commuting distances and a growth in municipal waste. As a society, increased consumption is leading to increasing impacts on natural resources in Scotland and around the world, through our global footprint. The global pressure on natural resources caused by a rising demand for energy and raw materials, and intensified by increasingly complex and uncertain international relations, will undoubtedly affect Scotland.

All around the world we are likely to see increased competition for natural resources such as fossil fuels, timber and building materials. Scotland has the opportunity to become a leader in technological areas such as renewable energy.

During our first 100 days in government, we have laid the foundations for a greener Scotland:

- We have established a Greener Scotland programme to focus on:
  - Climate Change
  - Consumption and production – moving towards a zero-waste society
  - Sustainable places
  - People, nature and countryside culture
- We believe that the public sector should set an example to others in the way it operates. Therefore, along with our partners in other parts of the public sector, we have begun to develop plans for the public sector to adopt a range of greener and more sustainable practices, for example through improved procurement to increase the use of recycled material;
- We have clearly stated our opposition to any new nuclear power stations being built in Scotland – and made this central to realising our clean energy ambitions; and
- We have set in motion a new entrants scheme for farming – and recognised the need to maintain Scotland's vital farming skills.

We will continue to make progress over the year ahead, using both legislative and non-legislative measures, to tackle and adapt to climate change, create more sustainable places valued by those who live and work in them, reduce the lifecycle impact of what we consume and produce, ensure our natural environment is respected and enjoyed, and ensure that we have living landscapes that reflect Scotland's identity:

- We will consult on proposals regarding the introduction of legislation to tackle the problem of climate change, establishing mandatory targets and monitoring arrangements to reduce our emissions by 80% by 2050 and putting in place a framework within which Scottish industries can invest with certainty in world-beating, low-carbon technologies, enabling Scotland to become a leader in developing solutions to this pressing global problem;
- We will publish a strategy for low-carbon buildings. This will be based on the input of an expert panel and will be targeted at increasing energy efficiency through building regulations;
- We will make progress on our proposals for a North Sea super-grid. We have already met with the European Commission on this topic and will meet with the Norwegian government shortly to take forward proposals to connect Scotland's huge offshore renewable generation capacity to electricity markets across Europe. We will also seek to remove the current barriers to the further development of renewable energy in Scotland through continuing discussions with the Office of Gas and Electricity Markets (OFGEM);
- We will consult on the proposed Scottish marine legislation, involving all relevant users including the fishing industry;
- We will develop, through consultation with local authorities and other delivery partners, our strategy for increasing recycling and other measures to move towards a zero-waste society;
- We will work with local authorities to achieve more sustainable places, where people can enjoy quality living, making more journeys on foot or cycle and reducing dependence on car use; and we will encourage good architecture and design carrying forward the best Scottish practice for

future generations to enjoy;

- Working with land managers, we will continue to preserve our habitats and our rich biodiversity and will promote the active enjoyment of them for health, recreation and education;
- We will reform crofting, following the work of the current inquiry, recognising the unique contribution that small scale land management practices can make in terms of public benefits to the environment; and
- We will encourage greater public use of the forests and countryside, which can provide for personal fitness and spiritual refreshment that can bring mental health benefits.

These measures – both legislative and non-legislative – will begin to put into action our comprehensive and rounded approach to achieving our aims. Later this year, we will publish our Strategic Spending Review, which will set out in more detail our plans to achieve a greener Scotland.

Together, these actions will help us to begin to realise Scotland's place in leading work on the environment and natural resources, whether through generating more renewable and green energy, saving energy or reducing waste and enjoying our heritage. If we work together to achieve a greener Scotland, we will be better placed to share success across all of our communities.



## APPROACH TO GOVERNMENT: DIRECTION, CONSENSUS AND VISION

As a minority government, we recognise the importance of working with others, both within the Parliament and elsewhere to seek consensus as far as possible on how we can work together to make Scotland more successful.

We recognise the complexities of government, and the need to lead and to bring others with us.

During our first 100 days, we and the country demonstrated competence and composure in meeting the challenges of the terrorist attack on Glasgow Airport and in protecting Scotland from the Foot and Mouth outbreak in Surrey.

Challenges of this nature can come into the day to day business of government at any time and we will continue to respond to such challenges as they occur, and do so calmly and with authority.

At the same time, we will also continue to provide the vision for Scotland to flourish.

It is government's job – and, indeed, the challenge of leadership – to identify some of the long-term opportunities and challenges that face us and propose how Scotland might react.

It is in this spirit that we have recently begun our national conversation on our constitutional future and we have asked every Scot to pause and reflect on the kind of country we are and to look forward to the kind of country we could be and should be.

Elsewhere, it has been the approach of this government to build consensus wherever we can and we will continue to do so over the year ahead.

The May 2007 election campaign demonstrated that there was broad agreement on many ideas and approaches. Indeed, this document contains a number of ideas which appeared to have some element of such support from at least some other parties. We hope that such a position remains.

In government, we fully recognise that many of our legislative proposals will be subject to debate and the initial ideas may be altered somewhat through such a process. However, such openness to persuasion needs to be reflected throughout the Parliament, not just from the government side.

It is in much the same spirit that we have signalled that we will consult directly with the public and organisations throughout Scotland on a number of pressing issues on which there is broad consensus for change:

- **Replacement Forth Crossing** – As part of the ongoing consideration of options we want to have the views of the public who will actually use the crossing – and, therefore, we will hold exhibitions, with a variety of options for the new crossing, in different venues in the area;
- **Health Care** – As part of our objective to build a healthier Scotland, we have launched a nationwide discussion document *Better Health, Better Care*. This will give the people of Scotland a say in the kind of health care they want to receive and will inform our new health and wellbeing action plan, that will be published by the end of this year;
- **Rural Issues** – As part of our objective to build a greener Scotland, the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment has undertaken a 'listening tour' throughout Scotland, gathering and discussing the views and concerns affecting communities in rural areas. This marks an important first stage in this government's

approach to work with, and create a better future for, rural Scotland. The new suite of grants under the Scotland Rural Development Programme will not be delivered by central government alone, but through a series of new regional partnerships involving local government and other stakeholders, so that grants increasingly reflect local as well as national priorities; and

- **Scotland's Futures Forum** – As part of the objective to build consensus and a shared understanding of issues, we will explore how government and the Scottish Parliament's Futures Forum might work more closely together. By developing much closer links, we will be able to look beyond immediate horizons to investigate and recommend long-term goals for our nation.

Over the year ahead, we will continue to hold consultations on significant issues which will impact upon the people of Scotland.

Scotland has so much potential. And with this approach to government – an approach based on competent government; on working in partnership and building consensus; and on setting a vision for our future – the nation can begin to achieve so much more.



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