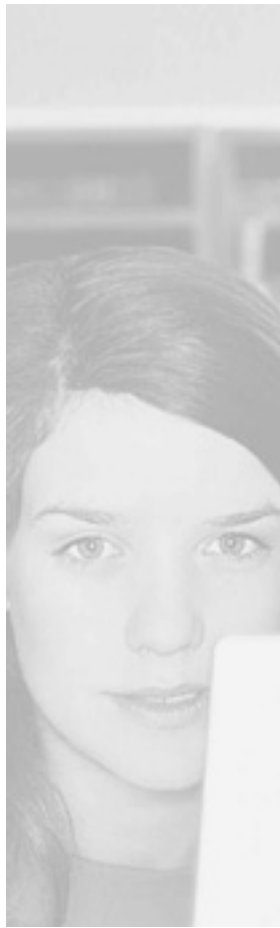




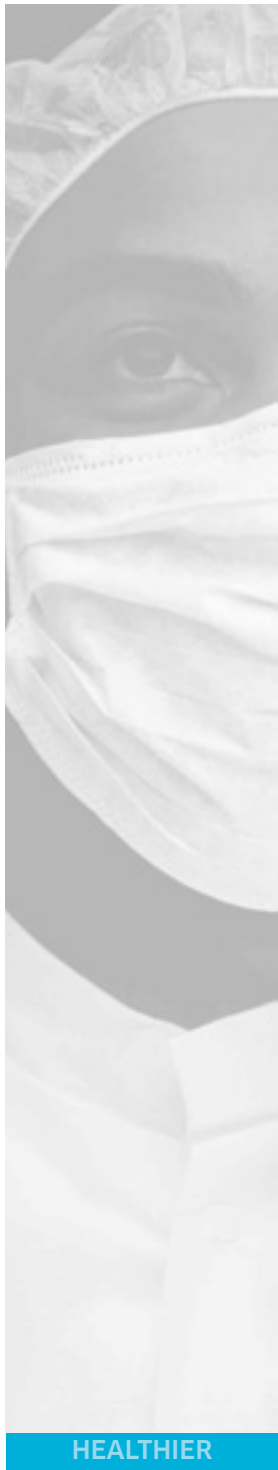
GREENER



WEALTHIER & FAIRER



SMARTER



HEALTHIER



SAFER & STRONGER

# MOVING SCOTLAND FORWARD: THE GOVERNMENT'S PROGRAMME FOR SCOTLAND 2008-09

SEPTEMBER 2008





**MOVING SCOTLAND FORWARD:**  
**THE GOVERNMENT'S PROGRAMME FOR SCOTLAND 2008-09**

SEPTEMBER 2008

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## Foreword

I am delighted to present the Scottish Government's programme for 2008-09 – the second since we took office in May last year. Over the next 12 months we intend governing with the same energy, and with absolute confidence in Scotland's ability to succeed.

We will show leadership and ambition, with a clear vision of the nation Scotland can be, working always to deliver step-by-step improvements in quality of life. We will work hard to overcome new challenges while making the most of emerging opportunities.

We will continue to work in partnership across Scottish society, because we know that government has only some of the answers and that a united Scotland is better placed to succeed. We will continue to build on our historic Concordat and our new, productive relationship with local government. Working as a team there is so much more that we can achieve.

Our core purpose as a government is to promote higher levels of sustainable economic growth. And in doing so we must harness the new confidence and optimism in this country, enabling all of Scotland's people to achieve their full potential. Our new legislative programme fully reflects this ambition. As always, new laws will only be one aspect of our efforts to create a Scotland that is safer and stronger, greener, healthier, smarter, wealthier and fairer.

Central to the new programme is legislation to advance Scotland's position as an environmental leader, with new bills on climate change, flooding and the marine environment. These will protect homes and workplaces, enable the sustainable management of our seas, create new business opportunities and position Scotland as a global leader in tackling climate change. And alongside these important legislative initiatives we will continue to position Scotland at the forefront of world-wide efforts to tackle climate change through the Saltire Prize, the further expansion of our renewable capacity and our innovative proposals for carbon budgeting.

This year will see new prison capacity and more police on local streets and we will introduce new legislation to strengthen Scotland's justice system through a Criminal Justice Bill. We will improve the operation of the legal system, with bills on the legal profession, arbitration and legislative reform.

In education, we will begin an extensive consultation on how best to invest £30m of additional money to ease the financial pressures on Scotland's students and introduce important legislation on additional support for learning, enabling more of our children to receive the full benefit from their education and helping them to achieve their full potential. Legislation that recognises the importance of rural schools will help to maintain strong communities and quality education across rural Scotland.

In the current climate of ever rising food and fuel costs, the Scottish Government has already taken action to alleviate the burden on households by working with local authorities to freeze council tax. In this parliamentary year we intend to introduce legislation to abolish council tax altogether, and introduce a better, fairer system of local income tax. And we will take forward our proposals to provide new opportunities for shared equity ownership to help young people take their first step on the property ladder and provide additional protections for those currently facing problems paying their mortgage.

The Scottish Government has already protected vital local health services and cut prescription charges, on the way to their full abolition. This year we will do even more to protect the health of the nation with a new Health Bill and continued investment to reduce waiting times. In addition to these new legislative proposals, we will continue our work to ensure that Scotland's economy can flourish. Businesses across Scotland are already benefiting from the Small Business Bonus Scheme introduced earlier this year. Indeed, from 1st April 2009, up to 120,000 business properties will be eligible for 100% rates relief. And this Government will continue to press for Scotland's fair share of soaring North Sea revenues to be invested in a fund that will drive the Scottish economy for generations to come.

The coming year will also see further progress in Scotland's National Conversation on our constitutional future. Several of the issues raised by this legislative programme and other government initiatives show how the current devolution settlement places limits on Scotland's ability to succeed. For example, we plan a bill to separate Scottish parliamentary and local government elections in Scotland, but we cannot enact necessary, more fundamental electoral reforms while Westminster retains responsibility for Holyrood elections.

Our National Conversation will allow the people of Scotland the opportunity to discuss the many improvements that will benefit our country under independence, or other forms of greater responsibility. This open discussion will allow the country to make a fully informed decision in the referendum on our constitutional future which we plan to hold in 2010.

We are moving forward to a future where success belongs to Scotland. And this year's programme marks an important step on that journey.



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

## Legislative Programme 2008-09

The Government's legislative priorities for the coming year are:

- Additional Support for Learning (Amendment)
- Arbitration
- Budget
- Children's Hearings
- Climate Change
- Council Tax Abolition
- Criminal Justice
- Flood Risk Management
- Health
- Legislative Reform
- Legal Profession
- Marine
- Public Services Reform
- Rural Schools
- Scottish Parliament and Local Government Elections



## SECTION 1

# OUR NEW APPROACH TO GOVERNMENT

Since taking office over a year ago this administration has adopted a new approach to government. We have a single, overarching 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 – and we are determined to work in partnership with wider Scottish society so together we can deliver on the Purpose.

We know the importance of working in partnership and so we have developed a new and productive relationship with local government, a new way of working, which is enshrined in our historic Concordat. This new relationship puts local government at the heart of governance in Scotland sitting alongside national government as an equal partner. We are working together to achieve agreed outcomes and to deliver growing success, opportunity and prosperity for the people of Scotland.

As never before, the Scottish Government is reaching out across Scotland's economy and society – to business, the public sector, the third sector – to build a consensus on what we can achieve as a nation and provide the routemap to get there. Our *Government Economic Strategy* sets out how we will deliver the Purpose and is crystal clear about the scale of Scotland's economic potential and this Government's ambitions for the future.

Our aim is to close the growth gap with the rest of the UK by 2011, and move forward to emulate the recent success of the small, independent countries off our shores. Even within an increasingly challenging global economic environment, we believe that we have set an agenda for government and a programme for economic progress that will put Scotland on a course for long-term success.

Our approach to government is based on:

- Vision – working to meet the rising ambitions of the people of Scotland;
- Trust – using responsibility wisely and fairly, and empowering local government and our communities; and
- Competence – getting the big decisions right and always putting Scotland's interests first.

The people of Scotland expect us to govern responsibly and effectively. Our approach is about repaying this trust. Our policies for the economy, society and environment embody Scotland's traditions of enterprise, responsibility and social justice. We are working in partnership at all levels, committed to improving services at a local level right through to positioning a modern progressive Scotland in the British Isles, Europe and throughout the world.

We are focused on sustainable economic growth – on all of us sharing in a better, fairer way of life. We want to deliver a more inclusive Scotland so that, no matter where people live, opportunities are open to them. This is our **social democratic contract** with the people of Scotland – and it is one we intend to honour during the lifetime of this parliament.

## How we are taking our new approach forward

Success will flow from a broad **social partnership** bringing together Scottish society as real partners in a process that is focused on delivering our Purpose and growing national success. The key to achieving our aims lies in reaching out and bringing together business, local government, the third sector, trade unions and others.

In this way we can build strong national agreement, through negotiation and talking openly, on some of the difficult issues affecting Scotland that have held Scotland back in the past and have proved intractable – alcohol and drug misuse, for example.

Over time, the debates around these issues have become sterile and unproductive, with arguments polarised. One illustration is the way in which, over the last couple of decades, the debate around drugs misuse has become viewed as a stark choice between harm reduction (accepting drug usage will happen and mitigating impact) or abstinence (“just say no”). We don’t accept that these views are irreconcilable. Scotland is not alone in being affected by such issues, and the key is to see what approaches will work best, given our particular circumstances.

### Preventing Offending by Young People – A Framework for Action

This framework sets out the shared vision of what national and local agencies working with children and young people who offend, or are at risk of offending, should do to prevent, divert, manage and change that behaviour. It has been jointly developed with partners including the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), the Association of Chief Police Officers Scotland, the Scottish Children’s Reporter Administration, the Crown Office, inspectorates and Audit Scotland.

The framework demonstrates a shift in attitude towards such young people, in particular through a focus on prevention and early intervention; and a move to an outcome-based approach which sets out a high level strategic vision, and empowers and supports local partners to deliver. This is reflected in the financial and performance management arrangements for youth justice, where we have moved away from ring-fenced funding and targets.

Confirming the commitment to a system which sees young people who offend as having needs, the framework stresses this is consistent with the other key objective of keeping communities and individuals safe, rejecting the often polarised nature of the debate. Securing consensus on a previously vexed and divisive subject is an early and significant demonstration of the benefit of our collaborative approach.

## Why we are taking this new approach

We are responding to the new confidence and ambition of the people of Scotland, capturing that spirit of ambition in the work of the Scottish Government. We believe wholeheartedly in greater responsibility for Scotland. Responsibility should lie with those best able to use it – in central or local government, or in our communities. We want to bring about a **culture of independence**, a culture of responsibility, to ensure communities and individuals can play their part in increasing sustainable economic growth in Scotland, turning the Purpose of this Government into a reality.

In that spirit, we are working to promote openness and accountability in the Scottish Government and beyond. The quality of public debate improves when our citizens can see and judge the results that government is delivering at national and local level.

- Scotland Performs allows people to track online our progress towards the Purpose, targets and outcomes.
- Single Outcome Agreements will allow people to see what is happening in their local area, and how public sector partners are jointly achieving better outcomes for their community.
- Exploratory discussions have begun on possible widening of the application of Freedom of Information legislation to cover more organisations carrying out certain public functions.
- Public services and other bodies are regularly inspected to check how well and how safely they are working. Work is underway to simplify the existing system of inspection.

Over the next year, we will get to grips with more of the issues faced to deliver public services with a structure fit for a nation and an economy of 5 million people. We will tackle blockages, duplication and over-complicated bureaucracy to achieve a more outcome-focused public sector and more efficient and streamlined public services, which provide better value for the public pound and help deliver our target of 25% fewer public bodies in Scotland.

- We will continue to build on the new relationship set out in the Concordat with COSLA to work together on key issues and to extend **Single Outcome Agreements** to Community Planning Partnerships, involving other key players such as the third sector.
- We will introduce a **Public Services Reform Bill** to take forward the simplification agenda for fewer national public organisations and other reforms to improve scrutiny and accountability. The Bill will also include proposals for establishing Creative Scotland.
- We will ensure that the ways we vote are clear for all to understand. Acting on the Gould Report, we will introduce a **Scottish Parliament and Local Government Elections Bill** so that Scottish Parliament and local government elections are held at different times.

## The National Conversation

The central issue that faces our country is how we govern ourselves in the future. A culture of independence and responsibility benefits the nation as a whole as well as organisations, communities and individuals. The Government is therefore making the case for Scottish independence but it recognises that there are other views and that there needs to be a full and open debate of all of the issues and options.

Through the National Conversation we are engaging with the people of Scotland and our civic institutions, to discuss the future of this country and the responsibilities we should have as a nation to make Scotland more successful.



As a result of the National Conversation there is now agreement among all Scotland's main political parties that the Scottish Parliament should have additional responsibilities. There is also now broad support in the Scottish Parliament in favour of a referendum to give the people a choice on Scottish independence. This is a once in a generation opportunity, and we will fulfil our manifesto commitment to introduce a Referendum Bill to allow a vote on independence to take place in autumn 2010. The Referendum Bill will provide the framework for the conduct and mechanics of the referendum itself.

The debate now turns on the scale of our ambitions for Scotland. We believe independence is the best state for small countries like Scotland. We believe that with independence we could match or exceed the economic success of countries like Ireland and Norway. So over the next year we will set out the positive case for independence – leading debate on the big issues for the future of Scotland: the economy; foreign policy and defence; justice and home affairs; social policy; energy and the environment. Others will make the case for other forms of change. What is important though is that we use the National Conversation to have a proper debate about what is best for our country and about what independence and responsibilities the Scottish Parliament and Government need to achieve the ambitions of our people. We want the people of Scotland to be fully informed about the arguments and choices when they cast their votes in the referendum in 2010.



## SECTION 2

### A SINGLE OVERARCHING PURPOSE

Scotland's economy has underperformed for decades. Over the last 30 years, our growth has averaged just 1.8% – roughly half of the average rate for small European countries and less than the UK as a whole. That is why we have unified government around a single overarching 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.**

The *Government Economic Strategy* sets out how we will achieve the Purpose. Global economic developments such as the credit crunch, slowing global demand and the rise in commodity prices have created a challenging economic climate for the Scottish economy and implementing our Purpose. However, through our economic strategy and our spending, we are putting in place measures that will help Scotland flourish in the longer term and give it the competitive edge to cope with the global economic uncertainty in the near term. Our nation's success, now and in the future, depends on us developing as a high growth, vibrant and sustainable economy.

By prioritising learning, skills and well-being, creating a supportive business environment, developing infrastructure and place, working towards more effective government and promoting equity, we will set strong fundamentals for increasing sustainable economic growth.

Our economic strategy is clear that government alone cannot meet all the challenges. That is why we are establishing new partnerships with Scotland's people, local government partners, civic institutions and businesses – and, why we have established new structures such as the Council of Economic Advisers and the National Economic Forum, to bring the best possible expertise to bear on increasing our national prosperity.

We have set a new level of ambition and a sharper aspiration for the future. Alongside our immediate growth target to raise Scotland's GDP growth rate to the UK level by 2011, we have set out the Golden Rules of Solidarity, Cohesion and Sustainability. These will ensure that future economic growth in Scotland is shared and sustainable, enabling greater levels of social, regional and inter-generational equity. This in turn will ensure that in the longer term all individuals, sectors, and regions are suitably equipped to succeed in the modern economy and are better able to adapt to changing circumstances.

Already, we have taken a number of major steps towards achieving the Purpose:

- Delivery of the *Government Economic Strategy* was backed up with the passing of the 2008-09 Scottish Budget. We approached this in a spirit of seeking consensus on what was best for Scotland, listened carefully to suggestions from all sides, and got Parliament's agreement to our financial proposals. Our **Budget Bill**, seeking approval for spending plans for 2009-10, will be taken forward in the same spirit.
- To be successful, a country needs good infrastructure – roads, railways and bridges, public buildings and public transport. Key national infrastructure priorities will be identified in the second National Planning Framework. The Scottish Futures Trust will soon be established, enabling us to release savings of up to £150m each year for extra investment.
- To be successful, a country also needs to be influential on the international stage. The International Framework and the various plans which fall under the framework, including the draft Action Plan on European Engagement, the refreshed China Plan, and the Government's new international development policy, set out the Government's international ambitions and explain how they support the Purpose.
- More effective public services that respond to local needs and priorities are an important part of how we will deliver. We made a good start in establishing and developing a new and strong relationship with local government through our historic Concordat with COSLA, signed in November 2007. This established a new framework between national and local government with a package of measures which includes the overall funding to be provided to local government; a significant reduction in ring-fenced funding streams; the development of Single Outcome Agreements which set priorities at a local level; and progress towards jointly achieving outcomes for Scotland.
- Creating the Council of Economic Advisers demonstrated our new approach. The Council – a group of leading international academics and business people – has been set up to advise us on ways to improve Scotland's sustainable economic growth rate.

## Achieving Scotland's 2011 Growth Target

An early priority for the Council of Economic Advisers has been to consider ways to increase sustainable economic growth in line with targets set in the *Government Economic Strategy*:

**By 2011:** *To raise the GDP growth rate to the UK level*

**In the longer term:** *To match the GDP growth rate of the small independent EU countries by 2017*

Council discussions relating to the growth target have acknowledged the scale of the challenge in matching UK growth by 2011 and the need for compatibility between this target and Scottish Government's targets to reduce emissions over the period to 2011 and reduce emissions by 80% by 2050. Substantial work has been undertaken with the Council to identify key areas in which the Scottish Government can take immediate action to speed up progress towards the delivery of the 2011 growth target in the current economic climate.

Following the Council's June 2008 meeting, a series of recommendations on achieving the 2011 growth target were made by the Council to the Scottish Government. The Council stated: *"Our discussion was centred on a series of policy initiatives, which has, as the overarching proposition, the need to create a narrative of economic success and a joined-up approach to promoting our country at home and abroad. The effective promotion of Scotland internationally is crucial if we are going to deliver higher levels of economic growth in the short term and for the future."*

The Council's recommendations, which have been accepted in full by the Scottish Government, included proposals to pursue population growth, develop a more supportive business environment, including planning, and targeting growth in key sectors. They also highlighted the need for real collaboration between government, the universities and business to maximise productivity in Scotland and challenged the Government to assess the costs of various energy options for Scotland, including energy efficiency measures.

## SECTION 3

### A GREENER SCOTLAND

*A Greener Scotland: Improve Scotland's natural and built environment and the sustainable use and enjoyment of it.*

Scotland's environment provides great opportunities to help make us a world-class economy and an international model for sustainable living. We made a good start during our first year in government in dealing with issues that required immediate attention to underpin Scotland's international standing and in beginning to restore strong sustainable rural communities and give them a fair deal.

- We achieved an historic deal at annual European fisheries talks, ensuring Scotland has control over its own days at sea. Our conservation credit scheme received international recognition and we are setting the European standard on how to fish sustainably.
- Our rural communities have the capacity to be a powerhouse for sustainability for the whole country. Their potential has long been untapped. We are starting to set this right by supporting and strengthening rural communities through the Scotland Rural Development Programme.
- We have taken the right decisions to promote opportunity for communities in different parts of Scotland. For example, we responded to local calls to include Highland Perthshire in the Cairngorms National Park and we propose to include Arran and parts of Moray and Nairn in the crofting areas.
- We made an announcement on waste policy following a summit with local authorities and other interested parties. This announcement set challenging targets

to achieve our radical vision of moving towards a zero waste society which minimises waste and treats waste that is produced as a resource. We have established a new partnership with local government to achieve these targets. We also announced a review of the National Waste Plan and established a zero waste think tank to harness independent, expert advice and we are consulting on possible waste provisions that might be included in the Scottish Climate Change Bill.



We are keen to build consensus around achieving a Greener Scotland and to look afresh with key partners at some of the difficult issues, including those that have been neglected or are now of more critical importance.

- We held the first ever Scottish Summit on Flooding in September. By bringing together relevant experts and those with key interests, we started discussions around managing flood risk in ways that best suit Scotland's needs and are considered best practice in the 21st Century.
- With the topics of food scarcity and pricing making headlines around the world, our National Food Discussion launched in January is very timely. Scotland produces a range of food and drink that is both healthy and affordable, and our food and drink industry contributes greatly to our economy. It is time we turned our attention to making the best of these resources, and delivered the freshest, finest future for Scottish food and drink. That is why we announced in June the next steps for the first ever national Food and Drink Policy, setting out our aim that Scotland becomes known for the quality, healthiness and sustainability of its produce.

The social partnership approach will continue to be an essential element of our work over the coming year, as we look to address challenges and expand opportunities. For example, we worked closely with the fishing industry in the preparation of the conservation credits scheme and the Shucksmith Inquiry engaged crofters the length and breadth of the crofting counties in formulating a vision for crofting in the 21st Century. It is our intention to continue extensive engagement with the full range of stakeholders:

- We pledged last year to introduce legislation to modernise the current law on flood prevention. The Scottish Summit on Flooding was part of the preparation for this, as was consultation on our bill proposals, providing wide opportunities for the views of the public, industry experts, local authorities and others to help shape the future of flooding legislation in Scotland. Having also considered the Rural Affairs and Environment Committee's recent report on its flooding inquiry, we published a report on the consultation in June, and plan to bring forward the **Flood Risk Management Bill** in September.
- We are committed to introducing a new law for Scotland's marine environment. The Sustainable Seas Task Force, which includes partners and people with an interest in the use and conservation of our seas, helped us develop proposals for a **Marine Bill**, forming the basis of a consultation that was launched in July.
- We shall act on the findings of the Committee of Inquiry on Crofting chaired by Professor Shucksmith and expect to consult next year on draft legislation to implement the Government's proposals in response.

Taking responsibility is nowhere more crucial than in relation to the environment. We each have a duty to think about the impact we make upon the world around us, ensuring that it can sustain and be enjoyed by our children and future generations. But

people don't want to be lectured; they want practical information and support to decide what new options they can choose for themselves. As a government, we have begun to take the necessary and ambitious steps forward that will allow people across Scotland to play a full part in meeting the global climate change challenge.

### Climate change

Climate change is one of the most serious threats facing Scotland and the world. Scotland was in the vanguard of the Industrial Revolution: emissions from industry are the primary source of human-induced climate change. Scotland is, therefore, under a moral imperative to take early action to reduce its emissions and move the country towards a low carbon economy.

Our commitment to reduce Scotland's emissions over the period to 2011 and, in the longer term, by 80% by 2050 demonstrates our resolve to play our part in tackling climate change. These targets were incorporated in the *Government Economic Strategy* in support of the Government's Purpose. The longer-term target will be placed into law through the Scottish Climate Change Bill and will play our part in the UK's effort to reduce emissions by 60% by 2050.

Climate change is already being felt in Scotland, and many of the impacts will continue to be unavoidable over the next 30 to 40 years due to past and present emissions. It is therefore essential that we take action to ensure Scotland is prepared to cope with such impacts. We launched a consultation paper in June, *Adapting Our Ways: Managing Scotland's Climate Risk* to help inform the development of a Climate Change Adaptation Framework for Scotland.

- We believe Scotland can lead the world in the global effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We proposed that we reduce Scottish emissions by 80% by 2050, as part of our consultation on the **Scottish Climate Change Bill**.
- Our Scottish Futures Trust will play an important role in ensuring that our investment in public buildings delivers greener buildings.
- We introduced practical measures to encourage people to embrace change in their everyday lives. The Climate Challenge Fund will help communities reduce their carbon footprint. This is backed up by information on how people can change their behaviour, through the 10 Steps to Greener Scotland campaign, which we will continue to promote and develop by working in partnership with others including Forestry Commission Scotland, Scottish Environmental Protection Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage. The campaign aims to encourage, inform and reward environmentally-responsible behaviour as well as providing routes to further advice and practical support to help people make more sustainable life choices across society in Scotland.

Together, these actions will help us to achieve a greener Scotland, and one where we will be better placed to share success across all our communities.

## SECTION 4

# A WEALTHIER AND FAIRER SCOTLAND

**A Wealthier and Fairer Scotland** – *Enable businesses and people to increase their wealth and more people to share fairly in that wealth.*

Scotland's economic growth rate has lagged behind that of the rest of the UK for far too long. And over the last few decades the rapid increases in wealth in small, independent countries such as Ireland, Iceland and Norway have not been matched in Scotland; poverty and disadvantage remain stubbornly persistent.

Yet Scotland has the people and assets to create a much wealthier and fairer nation. Our education system is one of the best in the world. Our financial services, life sciences and tourism industries have a global reputation. Our land and seas are renowned for the quality of their produce and stewardship of the high quality natural and built environment attracts visitors and investment. Scotland's natural resources give us the potential to be the green powerhouse of Europe and show global leadership on climate change and use of natural resources. Our culture is exceptionally rich, supporting an international reputation for creative talent, unique heritage and contemporary innovation.

Since May 2007 we have taken action to drive the economic and social transformation of Scotland. We have:

- Introduced the Small Business Bonus Scheme to save Scottish businesses up to £165m in business rates – money these businesses can now invest to grow and expand. This will be fully implemented, through local authorities, by 2009-10;
- Announced the creation of the Scottish Investment Fund as a long-term investment fund for the third sector to build capacity, capability and financial sustainability in the sector;

### Small Business Bonus Scheme

Businesses across Scotland are already benefiting from the Small Business Bonus Scheme and using the money saved to invest in growing and expanding. For example:

- A Glasgow-based aquarium and aquarium supplies business is investing in shop refurbishment and new products.
- An ambitious design marketing firm in Leith is providing more support for local community initiatives.
- An auto workshop in Angus is investing the savings in the installation, maintenance and upkeep of a waste oil and chemical waste processing system.
- A computer games shop in Aberdeen is investing in shop refurbishment and increasing expenditure on advertising and marketing.



- Offered councils the resources to freeze their council tax rates – and all local authorities made the decision to do so – giving hard-pressed families some respite amidst rising fuel and food costs;
- Connected Scotland better for people and businesses – starting work on the M74, removing tolls on the Forth and Tay road bridges, and piloting fairer ferry fares to the Western Isles;
- Driven forward previous legislation on planning reform, consulted on a draft second National Planning Framework for Scotland, and begun further steps to ensure our planning system is an aid not an obstacle to sustainable economic growth; and
- Brought the programme design and development of the next year’s Homecoming project into EventScotland, with a new team of specialists recruited, resulting in clearer accountability and closer links with the power of VisitScotland marketing.

### Scotland’s Renewable Energy Potential

Scotland’s immense potential in renewable energy is central to shaping our future prosperity, our capacity to respond to the pressing threat of climate change, and to secure energy supplies. We have incredible opportunities in almost every aspect of renewable energy, a world-leading scientific research base and North Sea oil and gas fields that will continue to yield their precious contents for decades to come. Working with partners we can establish this country as the green energy capital of Europe.

Already we have taken action towards securing that accolade for the people of Scotland:

- Building on increases in wind, hydro and biomass we launched the Saltire Prize, the world’s largest ever innovation prize focused on marine renewables – and tripled funding for community and micro-renewables.
- We commissioned research into the feasibility of an energy “supergrid” linking Scotland both to Ireland and across the North Sea, giving Scotland the potential to export its huge resource and to improve security of supply.
- We made an unanswerable case for OFGEM to end the unfair electricity transmission charging regime which could deter investment in Scotland, and also pressed the UK Government to transfer oil and gas revenues to Scotland so we can set up an Oil Fund for Scotland’s future. Discussions on this are continuing. Many other oil producing nations have developed such a fund, where a proportion of the revenue gained from oil and gas activity is placed into an investment fund. The fund is then managed to ensure that it can be used to generate wealth for future generations. In the case of Norway, the most recent estimate places the value of their fund at around £186bn, and by 2010 this could stand at a minimum of £250bn. In the case of Alberta in Canada, the latest estimate is £8.8bn. The build up of such funds reinforces the compelling case for such a fund to be developed for Scotland.
- We brought partners together to establish a Scottish European Green Energy Centre in Aberdeen to raise Scotland’s energy profile in Europe and to support government, industry and universities in working more effectively with European partners.

Listening to and working with the people and organisations who create wealth, as well as those who should be sharing in Scotland's prosperity, is central to our approach. For example, we have:

- Established a National Economic Forum – a social/ economic partnership bringing together business, trade unions, government, the wider public sector and the third sector to improve our approach to economic growth;
- Established a Rural Development Council – to ensure that rural Scotland plays its full part and that our three Golden Rules of growth are respected;
- Engaged in dialogue and debate about how we can work together to tackle poverty, deprivation and inequality;
- Ensured Scotland takes its place on the world economic stage with more joint public sector activity on a 'Team Scotland' basis, including, for example, Scottish Development International and VisitScotland, in the context of the Government's International Framework, such as the successful Global Financial Services Week and Scotland Week; and
- Revitalised the Scottish Fuel Poverty Forum to advise on achieving our target of eradicating fuel poverty.



Over the next year, we will consolidate this approach, getting to grips with issues that hold Scotland back or are unfair for many.

- Following the public consultation, we will introduce a **Bill to abolish Council Tax** and introduce a fairer Local Income Tax, based on ability to pay. Our proposals for the biggest tax cut in Scotland in a generation mean four out of five households will be better or no worse off.
- With regard to an Oil Fund, we will conduct an independent study to assemble the evidence from other hydrocarbon producers of how such arrangements create direct and long-term benefits for their economies – and the key advantages an Oil Fund offers Scotland in terms of powering our economy forward for generations to come, and helping with the impact of high fuel prices.
- We will introduce a **Legislative Reform Bill** to revise and replace the law on aspects of procedure and interpretation of legislation.
- We will introduce a **Bill to modernise arbitration**, ensuring arbitration fulfils its potential as an alternative to going to court to resolve disputes.
- We will continue to improve transport connections, with announcements on the Forth Replacement Crossing due in December 2008.

Our approach to creating a wealthier and fairer nation is based on making much better use of what we have – and the belief that we must work in partnership to deliver real and lasting improvement. At the same time we know Scotland could achieve much more, much faster, if equipped with the responsibilities and levers that provide the opportunity to improve our economic performance:

- Devolution of responsibility for economic and fiscal policy would allow a Scottish Government to create a competitive tax regime – attracting investment and funding public services that meet the needs of Scottish people;
- Responsibility for Scottish oil and gas reserves would support making the best of long-term production and give Scottish people a say in how this massive resource could be re-invested for current and future generations;
- Further devolution of employment policy would improve accountability and provide a better fit between economic and employment policy;
- Greater Scottish representation in Europe would allow Scottish interests to be promoted and protected more effectively in the development of European policies; and
- Greater control over immigration would enable the Scottish Government to boost Scotland’s population and meet the skills needs of the Scottish economy.

These issues will all be explored in greater depth in the course of the National Conversation.

## SECTION 5

### A SMARTER SCOTLAND

*A Smarter Scotland – Expand opportunities for people in Scotland to succeed from nurture through to life long learning, ensuring higher and more widely shared achievements.*

Throughout our history, Scotland has prized and been powered by learning and has often pioneered educational innovation. Since last May, we have taken action to maintain and develop our world-class education, to enable Scotland's people to be all they can be and to build a system that is as attractive to our own people as it is to talented people from elsewhere.

We began with measures needed most urgently:

- Restoring free education in Scotland, beginning with abolishing the graduate endowment fee, lifting a £2,289 burden from students and replacing loans with grants for part-time students;
- Making it a priority to focus on getting it right in the early years of children's lives and on early intervention, by increasing the entitlement to free pre-school education and by developing a joint policy framework together with Scotland's local authorities to improve outcomes for all of our youngest children and for all children and young people at risk;
- Transformational reform of the learning experience in Scotland from 3-18 through the Curriculum for Excellence, including consulting on a review of our National Qualifications to ensure they are fit for the future;
- Looking to the future, pursuing a major modernisation agenda jointly with Scotland's universities and maintaining the competitiveness of Scotland's universities through a record share of government expenditure and an additional £100m capital funding package;
- Enabling colleges to retain their charitable status, laying the first of two Orders to allow for this, with the second Order to follow later this year; and
- Setting out a new Skills Strategy with a vision of how skills can be developed and used to better meet the needs of individuals and employers in Scotland.

Education helps people to move ahead and escape disadvantage. It also enables them to contribute more effectively to their communities, to put more back in. Learning helps people to become more confident, ambitious





and self-sufficient. People may come to learning later in life or decide they want to re-train. A vital element of our social democratic contract with the people of Scotland is to enable people to make the best of themselves, as a key driver of economic growth. We have introduced measures that give people more opportunity to achieve that:

- Ensuring that access to learning is based on the ability to learn and not the

ability to pay, legislating to get rid of the £2,289 graduate endowment fee, so that current and future students no longer have to pay that charge and beginning the transition from student loans to grants, by removing loans for part-time students in 2008-09 and replacing them with a £500 grant.

- Ensuring that children of asylum seekers who have been here for at least three years get the same access as Scottish children to full-time further and higher education.
- Publishing proposals for rural schools and improving consultation on all proposed school closures. We intend to introduce a **Rural Schools Bill**, after considering responses to our proposals.
- Working with local authorities to provide nutritious free school meals for all P1-P3 pupils in five pilot local authorities from October 2007 to June 2008. If the evaluation of the trial is positive, we will be introducing secondary legislation and if passed, local authorities will provide free nutritious school meals to all P1-P3 pupils from August 2010.
- Working with Scotland's councils we are committed to reducing class sizes, as quickly as possible, in P1-P3 to a maximum of 18. We have provided additional capital allocation and specific arrangements for local authorities to maintain teacher numbers in the face of falling school rolls. Evidence shows that extra support in the earliest years pays dividends for children going forward.

Over the coming year we will work with COSLA, local authorities, colleges, universities, employers and the third sector:

- To take action to improve outcomes for our youngest children and those affected by risk by ensuring every child gets the help they need, when they need it, through universal services whenever possible and by refocusing services on building the capacity of families and communities;
- On proposed amendments to the Additional Support for Learning Act. In the autumn we propose to introduce an **Amendment Bill** to improve and further strengthen provisions for young people with additional support needs;

- To move into implementation of the biggest educational transformation of a generation – the Curriculum for Excellence. Working with local government, the school year 2008-09 will be spent on preparation for the new approaches – based on the recently published framework for learning and teaching – to be in place from school year 2009-10;
- By continuing to develop the thinking emerging from the Joint Future Thinking Taskforce on Universities and from the Review of Scotland’s Colleges to maximise the contribution which Scottish universities and colleges will make in the next 20 years to the Scottish economy, culture and society; and
- Moving on apace with our Skills Strategy and working with Skills Development Scotland to achieve the right skills for Scotland’s businesses and workforce, with a particular focus on skills utilisation.

### Skills utilisation

As a nation, we are not making the most of our relatively strong skills base.

Firms in Scotland have the potential to do much more with the skills available to them. We need to unlock that potential and improve how skills interact with the other drivers of productivity, such as capital investment and innovation. This challenge has given us an opportunity to develop a distinctively Scottish approach to social partnership, working together with employers and trades unions.

A group of individuals drawn from employers, trade unions and public bodies is currently being established, who will champion the skills utilisation agenda in their own organisations. The group will work to raise awareness of how better use of skills in the workplace can have wide-ranging benefits for business, employees and the Scottish economy.

Working in this way is a good example of how we are taking a fresh look at the challenging or difficult issues Scotland needs to address in order to be successful.

Having spent this first year in government addressing the most urgent wrongs, we are turning to some of the difficulties that have held Scotland back in the past. This will also help enhance our good reputation internationally.

Over the next year, we will:

- Work together with local government and other partners to lead a profound shift in culture and service delivery around implementation of the early years/early intervention framework;
- Work with local authorities to embed the principles of *Getting it Right for Every Child*, so that services apply those principles in specific contexts such as children affected by domestic abuse or parental substance misuse, children who are looked after, and young people involved in offending;

- Consult on the details of the reform of the Children’s Hearing system and then develop and bring forward a **Children’s Hearings Bill**;
- Take forward the implementation of key legislation, including the Adoption Act and the Protection of Vulnerable Groups Act;
- Develop a Youth Framework which will support all young people to achieve positive outcomes and make positive contributions through a wide range of opportunities and services;
- Subject to necessary secondary legislation being passed, extend entitlement for free school meals to all primary and secondary school pupils from families in receipt of both maximum child tax credit and maximum working tax credit from August 2009;
- Building on the abolition of the graduate endowment fee, consult on our plans to restore free education for all in Scotland, and develop our student support measures in light of that;
- Implement the Review of Scotland’s Colleges;
- Provide opportunities to further develop resilience, confidence and skills in young people and ensure that those who need it have more choices and more chances to access education, employment or training, building on the Determined to Succeed approach and collaborating with Scotland’s employers on this agenda;
- Take forward proposals for the next generation of National Qualifications and Scottish Science and Language Baccalaureates;
- Improve knowledge transfer across the Scottish economy and stimulate demand for and use of research and innovation by businesses;
- Launch a new science strategy for Scotland; and
- Continue to support £2bn of planned investment in new and improved schools, supported by the development of the Scottish Futures Trust.

In all of this, we hope to fully develop the people and the talent we have in Scotland.

## SECTION 6

### A HEALTHIER SCOTLAND

*A Healthier Scotland – Help people to sustain and improve their health, especially in disadvantaged communities, ensuring better, local and faster access to health.*

Having higher aspirations for Scotland is also about being ambitious for the health and wellbeing of our people. Our social democratic contract with the people of Scotland is based on excellent public services and good social provision. Over the past year, this has been illustrated, for example, by:

- Keeping and enhancing children's cancer services in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen and Dundee; and
- Giving the go-ahead for the new children's and adult hospital on the site of the current Southern General Hospital in Glasgow. The £842m project will be publicly funded, ensuring good value for Scottish taxpayers.

Scotland has a long and proud tradition of supporting fairness, justice and compassion. We have upheld and built on these important elements of our society and enhanced our identity during our first year in government by:

- Cutting prescription charges in April 2008, as a first step on the road to getting rid of the charges by 2011, ending the unfair tax on sick and vulnerable people;
- Reducing waiting times for patients. We have set a challenging target of achieving a maximum waiting time of 18 weeks from referral to treatment, by the end of 2011. As milestones towards this standard, NHSScotland has been set targets to reduce the longest maximum waits for a first outpatient appointment from 18 weeks to 15 weeks, for diagnostics tests from 9 weeks to 6 weeks and for inpatient and day case treatment from 18 weeks to 15 weeks, by the end March 2009; and
- Establishing the Sutherland Review to look at the funding of free personal care for the elderly, responding to concerns that it is currently underfunded. In the meantime, through working with local authorities, payments for personal and nursing care will increase in line with inflation from April 2008. In Scotland, we believe that our older people should have care and dignity in their later years.

A more successful Scotland will be one in which each and every one of us takes more responsibility for our own long-term health and wellbeing. Ultimately some of the most important health choices are ones we take ourselves. We have been working to enable people to make healthier and better choices:



- We are helping at least 20,000 overweight and obese children, so that they and their parents have the information and tools to make better choices;
- Infection, prevention and control in our health services is everyone's business. Simple measures, such as hand hygiene, are measures we must all take responsibility for. The fact that NHS compliance with hand hygiene rules has risen by 19% in a year to 87% is to be welcomed, but we are determined to build on this progress and our investment of over £50m over the next three years is to drive all infections down year on year. One of the key areas will be our national MRSA Screening Programme from 2009-10, but a whole range of new measures are being introduced over the next three years to tackle all Healthcare Associated Infections, including *Clostridium difficile*; and
- We are engaging people in discussions about a lasting legacy for Scotland from the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games.

Our approach to a healthier Scotland as set out in *Better Health Better Care*, the Government's action plan for a healthier Scotland, involves giving a voice to a wider range of people and organisations. We want to encourage debate and discussion, forging a future agenda based on agreement about the type of health service and health priorities that people want. As part of this, we have already:

- Enabled local priorities to be more closely considered, and by doing so we have reversed the decisions to close Accident and Emergency services in Ayr and Monklands;
- Consulted on more patient and community involvement in health services. The Health Boards (Membership and Elections)(Scotland) Bill which will deliver on this and on direct elections to NHS Boards is already one of the package of bills currently scheduled to go through Parliament. Bringing our NHS closer to local people will be a key task in the coming months; and
- Brought together a task force with key partners, which reported in June 2008, to tackle the major health inequalities Scotland faces. Over the next year, it will be a priority to implement the task force's recommendations.

### Health inequalities

Scotland's health status is held back by the poor health of its most deprived communities. The Ministerial Task Force on Health Inequalities was set up to tackle those inequalities, that left unaddressed will prevent Scotland from achieving the Government's overall Purpose of sustainable economic growth, supported by increased healthy life expectancy.

The Task Force has embodied the Government's new way of working. It included Ministers from across the Government, key partners from local authorities, NHSScotland, the research community and the third sector. It has looked across Ministerial portfolios to address the underlying causes of health inequalities and bring together thinking on poverty, lack of employment, children's lives and

support for families, physical and social environments, as well as on health and wellbeing. The Task Force's approach and the way it envisages change being delivered align with the Government's new relationship with local authorities and their community planning partners. COSLA has been a full partner in developing policy within the Task Force's joined-up approach, and the recommendations, and the way in which they will be delivered, are in the spirit and framework of the Concordat between national and local government.

The Task Force's approach will be tested out in learning networks in some local test sites. Starting from the client's perspective, and making best use of good practice and evidence, they will refocus a range of public services locally to support resilience and wellbeing and, in the longer term, people's capacity to improve their own health.

Reducing inequalities in health will play a significant part in creating a skilled, resilient population with the sense of wellbeing and control over their own lives, keen to look after their own health and able to participate in the economy and employment opportunities of the future.

Social partnership and finding common ground will continue to be a priority over the coming year. As we move to Single Outcome Agreements for Community Planning Partnerships, they will increasingly impact on health issues, involving work across the public sector and engagement with the third sector.

- We will encourage health services and local government to work together to deliver local health and community care centres, using the Scottish Futures Trust.
- We will introduce a **Health Bill**. This will include measures to support the delivery of our new smoking prevention action plan, setting out the next steps in controlling the availability and promotion of tobacco. It will also debar commercial companies from bidding to provide GP services, to ensure that the central role of General Practice continues to be delivered from within the traditional NHS family.
- We will also legislate to tackle the major issue of alcohol misuse in Scotland. The measures that we will put in place will depend on the outcome of our current consultation on alcohol misuse *Changing Scotland's relationship with alcohol: a discussion paper on our strategic approach*. Subject to the consultation results, measures such as prohibiting offsales to under 21s; minimum pricing; social responsibility fee; and alcohol-only checkouts, may be delivered through planned criminal justice and licensing legislation.



## Alcohol framework

The total cost of alcohol misuse to Scotland is estimated to be around £2.25bn in 2006-07. This includes an estimated cost of £400m to Scottish industry in lost productivity and absence and a similar cost to NHSScotland. Alcohol-related deaths in Scotland have more than doubled in the last 15 years and in the last decade alcohol-related attendances at Scottish hospitals have increased by almost 50%. Over the last 20 years Scotland has had one of the fastest growing chronic liver disease and cirrhosis rates in the world.

45% of Scottish prisoners in 2007 said they were drunk at the time of their offence and an audit of Scottish Emergency Departments suggested that at least 70% of assaults presenting may be alcohol-related. There were 990 casualties on Scottish roads in 2005 as a result of accidents involving illegal alcohol levels. 40% of 15 year olds and 15% of 13 year olds drank alcohol in the week before they were surveyed. It is estimated that 65,000 Scottish children live with a parent whose drinking is problematic.

These statistics show that harms associated with alcohol misuse are neither limited to health nor experienced solely by the drinker and can damage family and friends, communities, employers and Scotland as a whole.

We are determined to provide the necessary leadership to tackle alcohol misuse, but we recognise that we cannot deliver the long-term sustainable change required alone. It is essential that we work in partnership with a wide range of other bodies and groups such as local government, NHSScotland, the police, the third sector and the alcohol industry. We have published proposals on tackling alcohol misuse for consultation, however, we actively welcome ideas and suggestions from our partners and the public to help refine our approach and to ensure that we can change Scotland's relationship with alcohol for good and use our resources effectively to address the problems we are facing today.

- We will take forward the recommendations in Lord Sutherland's Independent Review of Free Personal and Nursing Care, including introducing secondary legislation to remove charges for food preparation and seeking the return to Scotland of £30m a year in lost Attendance Allowance funding. We will work with our partners, including local government, to take forward a programme of response to the action points arising from the review.
- We will make a further cut to the price of prescription charges and prepayment certificates, the second cut in the process of abolishing charges by 2011.

Over the next year, these measures will begin to put Scotland further on the path to a healthier future.

## SECTION 7

### A SAFER AND STRONGER SCOTLAND

*A Safer and Stronger Scotland – Help local communities to flourish, becoming stronger, safer places to live, offering improved opportunities and a better quality of life.*

A strong economy must be underpinned by safer and stronger communities: communities that people are proud to belong to; communities where people feel safe and have confidence that justice and fairness will prevail; communities that allow people to realise their ambitions; communities where the standard of living is improving, especially for the most disadvantaged; and communities where people take responsibility for each other and for their own actions.

Since May 2007 we have made significant strides towards a safer and stronger Scotland, including:

- Working with police forces to have 1,000 additional police officers available in Scotland's communities by 2011;
- Strengthening controls on sex offenders by implementing the National Accommodation Strategy for Sex Offenders;
- Introducing the Sexual Offences (Scotland) Bill to reform the law on rape and sexual offences;
- Prioritising child protection, through a new child protection phone line, rolling out the framework for a new vetting and barring scheme and strengthening child protection committees;
- New intensive support and supervision measures for young people at high risk and investing in improving the secure estate;
- Establishing a taskforce to spearhead and co-ordinate the fight against serious organised crime;
- Putting the proceeds of crime back into communities and improving the lives of young people, providing over £5m for free football and rugby coaching and arts and culture activities;
- Strengthening support for the most vulnerable families, including working with local authorities to provide an allowance for approved kinship carers of looked after children on an equivalent basis to foster carers, with a dedicated service to all kinship carers to be provided in the near future by Citizens Advice Scotland;



- Meeting Scotland's long-term needs for high quality housing of all tenures by setting a national goal to increase supply to at least 35,000 new homes a year by the middle of the next decade;
- Providing £25m to kick-start a new generation of council house building, the first of any significance in decades; establishing the LIFT – the Low-cost Initiative for First Time buyers – to help more people achieve sustainable home ownership; and announcing a Homeowners' Support Fund to help those threatened by repossession as a result of the credit crunch;
- Helping to transform some of Scotland's most deprived communities by investing in the Riverside Inverclyde, Irvine Bay and Clydebank Rebuilt Urban Regeneration Companies and in the Clyde Gateway project to regenerate the East End of Glasgow and neighbouring parts of South Lanarkshire;
- Introducing legislation to safeguard the rights of people who develop pleural plaques after being exposed to asbestos as a result of an employer's negligence;
- Launching the Scottish Sustainable Communities Initiative in June 2008; and
- Carrying out a review of community penalties, which we reported in November 2007.

This is just the start of a much more fundamental programme of reform to deal with some of Scotland's most serious problems. In many cases this will require a long, hard look at existing policy and practice; informed and wide-ranging discussion and debate; and the courage to take a new direction. We will not shrink from that responsibility and have already taken action by:

- Establishing the Prisons Commission to look at the purpose of prison in a modern Scotland. The Commission reported in July and we are giving priority consideration to its 23 challenging recommendations;
- Taking forward an independent, public judicial inquiry into the Shirley McKie case to restore public confidence in the criminal justice system;
- Asking Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of the Constabulary to review the roles and responsibilities of police forces in Scotland. His independent report will make recommendations by the end of the year;
- Developing and launching Scotland's first drugs strategy for almost a decade;
- Piloting drug treatment and testing orders for less serious offenders;
- Developing and launching a partnership framework for youth justice, strengthening early and effective intervention with young people at risk, and committing to legislate to keep children out of adult prisons;
- Consulting on reforms to the children's hearings system to strengthen intervention and support for our most vulnerable children and families;
- Pressing the UK Government to transfer responsibility for firearms legislation to the Scottish Parliament and, in the absence of their agreement, hosting a Scottish Firearms Summit as a first step to building a consensus for action; and

- Supporting those who do not wish to buy their own home through reforms to improve the supply, quality and affordability of social housing, and through encouragement of the private rented sector to play a greater role in meeting housing need.

### The Road to Recovery – Scotland’s Drugs Strategy

Scotland has a long-standing and serious drug problem compared to other similar European countries, including England. It is a significant driver of economic underperformance, crime, risk to children and health inequalities costing Scotland £2.6bn per year. Over the last 18 months the groundswell of expert opinion that fundamental change is needed has been reflected in a number of influential expert reports.

*The Road to Recovery* draws on those reports and sets out a vision for a new approach to tackling problem drug use, based on promoting recovery. It describes how the Government will work with partners across the field to translate this into reality (in the context of the Government’s Purpose, the National Outcomes and the wider reform of public service delivery).

The strategy was well received by experts and practitioners in the field and approved unanimously by Parliament. The emphasis now is on delivery, in particular considering how to embed planning and delivery of drug treatment services in Single Outcome Agreement structures, and to ensure services have a recovery focus. The Government looks forward to a report from the expert group set up to consider these issues, as well as the report on drugs and alcohol expenditure from Audit Scotland, as key factors for implementing change for 2009-10.

Going forward, we will build on these actions and modernise the Scottish legal system so that it deals more efficiently and appropriately with crime and disorder and provides a supportive environment for business:

- We intend to implement the Judiciary and Courts (Scotland) Bill to modernise the organisation and leadership of Scotland’s judiciary.
- We will introduce a **Legal Profession Bill** to provide for alternative business structures, giving consumers more choice. The Bill will deliver the first significant reform of the legal profession since 1980 and will make it possible for legal services to be delivered in new ways and allow Scottish law firms to compete internationally, while ensuring strong regulation to protect the public.
- We will identify ways to streamline and improve the operation of tribunals in Scotland, in light of the review being led by Lord Philips.
- We will respond to Lord Gill’s fundamental review of the civil justice system.

We are taking action to make sentences served in the community more robust, immediate and visible, as set out in the report of our review of community penalties. Drawing on the findings of the Prisons Commission we will also drive forward reforms and initiatives to prevent offending and reduce re-offending – focusing especially on early intervention, providing positive opportunities for young people and keeping them out of prison. We will work to achieve a flexible and coherent penal policy that ensures prison remains the right disposal for serious and violent offenders with measures to deliver interventions, support and appropriate restrictions for the entire length of the sentence. A priority will be to ensure that criminal justice works as intended to protect victims and witnesses and to ensure appropriate sentencing. We will bring forward a **Criminal Justice Bill** to tackle some of these issues.

Over the coming year, we will consult on draft legislation to safeguard Scotland's stock of social housing for future generations and to ensure that the stock is managed to deliver improved value for tenants and taxpayers. Our draft Housing Bill will outline provisions for achieving these objectives by ending Right to Buy on all new social housing and by modernising the powers of the Scottish Housing Regulator. Subject to the outcome of our current policy review, the Bill could also contain provisions for a wider reform of our Right to Buy, when it is introduced in 2009-10.

In all of the above, our approach is to work with and listen to interests and communities across Scotland and, where necessary, to take bold and radical steps to address deeply ingrained problems.

## SECTION 8

### YOUR VIEWS

Our new approach to government includes a commitment to a continuing dialogue with the people of Scotland. That means hearing what people from across the country have to say about the issues which matter to them most.

We have, therefore gone beyond the kind of consultation and engagement work developed under previous governments. Our aim is to get out and about around Scotland to talk face to face with people in all parts of the country, particularly outside the central belt.

This public engagement activity reflects the founding principles of the Scottish Parliament – openness, accountability and a participative approach to the development of policy – as well as our partnership approach to government. It has complemented continued use of tried and tested consultation techniques and our innovative work in taking forward a genuine National Conversation on options for Scotland’s constitutional future – a project which is, of course, the central public engagement commitment of this Government on the central issue for our country.

Over the summer, the Scottish Cabinet has met in Dumfries, Inverness, Pitlochry and Skye. We have used these occasions to give local people and local communities the opportunity to question members of the Cabinet face to face on the issues that concern them. These have included:

- The impact of higher household energy, food and fuel bills on Scottish families;
- The economic potential of Scotland harnessing its abundant natural resource in wave and wind to become more self-sufficient and to maximise commercial advantage;
- The impact of high fuel prices on hauliers and the fishing industry;
- The need for improved transport links;
- The potential for Homecoming 2009 to mitigate the impact of the economic downturn on tourism in Scotland; and
- The need to increase the availability of social housing in Scotland.





During the coming year, we want to continue in that spirit, hearing people's views and doing this in more participative ways. We plan to take forward a number of significant consultations and other forms of dialogue and engagement on a wide range of issues, such as:

- Student support;
  - The next generation of National Qualifications;
  - A radical range of measures to reduce alcohol-related harm;
  - Proposals for a Patients' Rights Bill;
  - Reforms to the jury system;
- 
- The next stage of developing the Food and Drink Policy;
  - Issues connected to the Forth Replacement Crossing Project; and
  - Revisions to waste regulations.

This document sets all these elements in the context of our new approach to government and the shared agenda we are building to move Scotland forward.



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