

Dear First Minister

We are writing to you as a group of social and environmental justice NGOs, grassroots community groups, faith groups, service providers, funders, economists, academics, think tanks and business leaders united in our belief that Scotland must urgently transition to a Wellbeing Economy.

Many of us are firefighting to provide frontline support to those swept up in the rising tide of destitution. Others among us are trying to play our part in the transition to an economy that values people and the environment, for example, piloting new ways of providing for each other, running community energy projects and deploying alternative business models that contribute to our communities. Others are directly involved in efforts to restore nature and tackle poverty.

Too many people in Scotland are living in cold homes, skipping meals and falling behind on rent while Scotland's 20 richest families own more wealth than 30 percent of the poorest citizens combined. In the most deprived 30% of Scottish areas life expectancy is falling. At the same time, there are growing fears that Scotland's legal emissions reductions targets will be missed and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) recently warned that the world faces a "brief and rapidly closing window to secure a liveable future." The IPCC also echoed our collective belief that GDP is a poor metric of human wellbeing.

As a founding member of the Wellbeing Economy Governments partnership, Scotland has played an important role in building momentum for change among governments. We were pleased to see the aspiration to become a Wellbeing Economy contained within Scotland's National Strategy for Economic Transformation. We also welcomed the publication of the first iteration of the Wellbeing Economy monitor, efforts to encourage fair work, support for community wealth building and the commitment to review how to increase the number of purposeful and democratic businesses in Scotland. And we are looking forward to seeing the recommendations of the Business Purpose Commission and Just Transition Commission being taken forward. These are steps in the right direction.

But we are writing to you today because we are concerned that progress isn't happening fast enough to meet the very real and urgent challenges we face. To date, we have not seen substantive progress in redesigning our economy which continues to break planetary limits and create high levels of inequality. With its narrow focus on GDP growth, the National Strategy for Economic Transformation is grounded in the same logic that has delivered decades of poverty, inequality and environmental degradation. What is required now is a robust plan to put the wellbeing of people and nature at the heart of our economy.

Today we have published a joint statement on what we envision such a Wellbeing Economy to look like in Scotland, which will require actions from governments in both Westminster and Holyrood.

As next steps on the journey to a Wellbeing Economy we ask you and the Scottish Government to use the powers at your disposal to:

Transform the National Performance Framework into a Wellbeing Framework and strengthen its power and reach.

- In the short-term, this requires a comprehensive engagement process to underpin the review of the National Outcomes so the people of Scotland have a voice in shaping what the framework measures.
- In the medium term, ensure the upcoming Wellbeing and Sustainable Development Bill puts the wellbeing framework on a stronger statutory footing to provide a clear vision for public bodies, bringing together and strengthening a range of duties to put collective wellbeing and

environmental sustainability at the centre of decision-making. This should include enhanced support and scrutiny mechanisms, for example through the promised Future Generations' Commissioner. The Scottish Government should also bring forward a clear outcome budgeting framework, evidencing how public spending delivers wellbeing outcomes.

Use devolved tax powers to share Scotland's wealth more evenly and support public investment in a strong social safety net, universal basic services, fair public sector wages and environmental improvements needed for a Wellbeing Economy.

- In the short-term, the next Budget should continue progressive moves to increase tax revenue more fairly and clearly set out both the distributional impacts of this and how revenue will be invested in areas that can help Scotland progress to a Wellbeing Economy.
- In the medium term, the Scottish Government should undertake wide-ranging public engagement to develop options to realise a fully progressive tax system, including more fundamental reforms to income tax rates and bands, a clear roadmap for reforming/replacing the regressive council tax, and options to utilise local tax powers.

Reshape the business environment in Scotland to facilitate a shift towards purposeful and democratic business practices that support collective wellbeing and environmental sustainability and do not profit from undermining either of them.

- In the short-term, enterprise agencies and all public business support should prioritise purposeful and democratic business practices, including social enterprises, cooperatives and employee-owned enterprises, as recommended by the Business Purpose Commission. All projects to support entrepreneurship, innovation and start-ups delivered as a part of the National Strategy for Economic transformation should be focused on those businesses that can make the biggest contribution to a Wellbeing Economy and should be tailored to different rural and urban contexts.
- In the medium-term, fair work conditions on public sector grants and contracts should be strengthened and extended to other dimensions of a Wellbeing Economy, including environmental aspects and democratic governance structures. Options should be developed for better incentivising purposeful business – for example, reforms to non-domestic rates and the introduction of environmental levies.

Scotland is full of hopeful and inspirational action that is putting the Wellbeing Economy thinking into practice. But transforming such actions into the economy we all need will require bolder action by the Scottish Government to set the direction of the economy, it requires a stronger infrastructure for participation in economic policy-making, ensuring that seldom heard voices are listened to, and it requires increased public investment into places, people and nature to deliver what really matters to people.

We hope that you will consider our asks and we would be keen to meet to discuss this further.

Signed by

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