

# Protecting Scotland's future: The Government Programme for Scotland 2019-20

4<sup>th</sup> October 2019

The programme, announced on the 3<sup>rd</sup> September, sets out the Scottish Government's plans to make Scotland a more successful country, with opportunities and increased wellbeing for all.

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There are a number of themes across the publication which affect urban and rural communities alike, revolving around wellbeing and safeguarding for the future. There is a distinct focus on rural and regional economies, recognising the contribution they make to the Scottish economy as well as other focuses on green energy, infrastructure and supporting economic development. The Scottish Government have made a commitment to continue current support until 2024, however beyond this it is less clear.

Although there are a number of new schemes mentioned, all of which aim to support the Scottish people, there is no comment on how existing support across specific regions of the country will be continued, and if target recipients will remain the same. The paper introduces a number of ideas however does not disclose many specific details of schemes which are to be implemented meaning it is hard to fully decipher what the full effect of the programme will be.

## Key bills for introduction in 2019-20

- **Rural Support**  
The Bill will create regulation-making powers for the Scottish Ministers to amend or replace the EU Common Agricultural Policy elements of retained EU law and provide new powers for the collection of agricultural data. The retained EU legal powers are needed if Scotland has to leave the EU, after which it would seek to simplify and improve CAP legislation for its operation beyond 2020.
- **Animal Health and Welfare (Amendment)**  
This Bill will increase the maximum penalties for the most serious animal welfare offences to five years' imprisonment and/or an unlimited fine and also make changes to the maximum penalties for various wildlife offences. It will increase the protection for service animals by implementing 'Finn's Law'. The Bill will also provide powers to make regulations for fixed penalty notices in relation to animal welfare offences and provides a new process to allow animals that have been taken into possession on welfare grounds to be sold or rehomed without the need for a court order.
- **Good Food Nation**  
This Bill will underpin the significant work already being done – or planned – to deliver the Good Food Nation ambition in Scotland. It places responsibilities on Scottish Ministers and selected public bodies to set out statements of policy on food and to have regard to these statements in the exercise of relevant functions.

## Theme - Ending Scotland's Contribution to Climate Change

Scottish land plays a crucial role in the solution to the global climate change emergency. The Government are commissioning independent advice regarding changing usage patterns for land in order to optimise rural land use, including agriculture and forestry.

Scotland's Climate Emergency Response Group is working in collaboration with the Scottish Government who have pledged the following:

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- Creation of a new Agricultural Transformation Programme focused on sustainability, simplicity, profitability, innovation, inclusion and productivity.
- Creation of regional land use plans which will allow potential to be maximised for all of Scotland's land in order to contribute to the fight against climate change

### **Scottish Land:**

Climate change is both a challenge and opportunity for rural communities in Scotland; through a range of CAP schemes, farmers have been supported in modernising processes and transitioning to a lower-carbon, more sustainable future.

- **Farming and Food Production**

Work is beginning this year to:

- o Develop pilot schemes to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture
- o Encourage tree planting across Scotland
- o Promote multiple benefits of good grassland management
- o Encourage investment in renewable energy
- o Support strategic crop production and development of organic farming
- o Develop and promote carbon-neutral farms

- **Peatlands**

Peatlands are a vast CO<sub>2</sub> sink and provide myriad benefits, from improvement of air and water quality, to habitat creation and flood alleviation.

The Scottish government are investing £14 million to fund projects working to restore damaged and degraded peatlands across the country.

- **Forestry**

The Scottish Government have pledged to plant 12,000 hectares in 2019-20, with the goal increasing to 15,000 hectares annually by 2025, this endeavour is being supported by £5 million funding available for woodland and forestry creation to tackle climate change.

## **Theme - A Successful, Fair and Green Economy:**

### **Tourism:**

Scotland's tourism industry is a crucial contributor to the overall economy, employing over 200,000 people. In 2017, the Government announced a two-year, £6 million funding package through the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund in order to enhance the visitor experience to iconic rural and island sites; a further £3 million has been pledged for investment in new projects in 2020-21.

### **Strengthening rural and island economies and communities:**

Scotland's rural and island assets are critical to success, providing natural and business resources for many key economic sectors, from food and drink, to energy and tourism.

Although more young people are staying in rural communities, further work will be done to stem depopulation from rural and island areas through promotion of rural businesses and industries.

As part of the fourth National Planning Framework, there is increased emphasis on proactive policy options which will allow planning to support developments which allow for dynamic rural communities to be sustained and supported into the future.

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Connectivity via the West Highland rail corridor is being scrutinised and opportunities identified for integration with local communities and the wider economy.

#### **Maximising the value and sustainability of land and marine assets:**

Farming and agriculture are at the heart of many rural communities; the Government have pledged to support payment entitlements through the CAP, maintaining it until 2024, should the UK leave the EU. Leaving the EU without a deal will impact heavily upon farming and food production and all possible options are being explored to mitigate the impacts where possible.

In order to future-proof the industry, more new entrants need to be encouraged into farming. Since 2016, more than 6,400 hectares of land have been released to help 61 new entrants into the industry, with around £24 million invested into 250 agricultural businesses to support development projects.

A Women in Agriculture taskforce has been set up to identify measures which can be taken to develop the skills and talents of women in agriculture in order to ensure the long-term sustainability of the sector.

Crofting is an integral part of Scottish heritage and enhances the natural landscape and habitats within, helping sustain people working on the land in remote rural communities.

#### **Animal and plant health and welfare:**

New documentation has been published on Farm Animal Welfare Guidance for the keeping of chickens for meat, with similar guidance for egg-laying hens and other livestock production systems due to be introduced in the next year. This will maintain Scotland's position as one of the world leaders for animal welfare.

#### **Good Food Nation:**

The Government wish to keep delivering on their ambition to work towards a Scotland where everyone takes pride in and benefits from the food which is produced, bought, cooked and sold on a daily basis. There are opportunities for young people to learn more about where their food comes from, with food education, healthy cooking classes and community farming schemes broadening horizons.

## **Theme - Communities Where Everyone is Valued, Protected and Respected:**

#### **Land Reform:**

The Scottish system of land ownership, use, rights and responsibilities is under improvement in order for land to contribute to society in a fair way, balancing public and private interests.

A new community right to buy for sustainable development will be introduced by spring 2020, with an international land reform conference scheduled to demonstrate progress which has been made.

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