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5 OCT 2011

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3 October 2011

Richard,

Thank you for your joint letter of 31 August about the National Performance Framework (NPF) refresh, also signed by Stan Blackley of Friends of the Earth Scotland and Judith Robertson of Oxfam Scotland, to whom I am copying my reply.

I appreciate the joint briefing and recommendations compiled by the 3 bodies on behalf of the 31 organisations who collaborated to pull together their jointly held views. It is heartening to learn of the degree of enthusiasm and recognition these and other organisations, like the Carnegie UK Trust, have given to the progress made over the past 4 years by the Scottish Government in developing the NPF and "living" the move to an outcomes model of governance, which the Framework supports.

Your representations have crossed with a number of strategic documents and plans the Government has published over the last month, including the Government Economic Strategy (GES), which reaffirmed our commitment to the agenda we set in 2007 and the fundamental principles of that approach, including our central purpose of "delivering faster, sustainable economic growth with opportunities for all people across Scotland to flourish".

The GES reaffirms our belief that faster sustainable economic growth is the key to unlocking Scotland's full potential and is the avenue through which we can deliver a better, healthier and fairer society.

In terms of your specific recommendations, you will want to be aware that the purpose has not changed. That said, it is important to remember that its focus on faster, sustainable economic growth is carefully balanced alongside important social, regional and environmental objectives, as explained in the GES, published on 12 September. Within the NPF, the purpose is explained in terms of the high level Purpose Targets which focus on the drivers of growth and measure progress towards achieving the Purpose. These have been reviewed and rolled forward to reflect the current social and economic environment, which is markedly different to that of 2007 when we embarked on this journey.

As to the other layers of the Framework. We believe that maintaining continuity and a shared focus on the long-term is vital if we are to realise our vision of success. Therefore, the Strategic Objectives and National Outcomes will not change. We are of course always willing to listen to suggestions along the way and in reviewing the NPF, will take account of representations such as your own and policy and analytical input which has come from across SG directorates. In concluding the refresh, we will take a balanced view of all interests and representations received and with that in mind I have already asked officials to look at improvements to Scotland Performs in due course to better articulate the connections between the layers of the NPF and in particular how progress toward the National Outcomes contributes to the Purpose and Purpose Targets.

The NPF is of course, a key plank of Scotland's outcomes-based approach to government; and it is still early days implementation wise. However, we are determined to stick with this course, as we believe that it is only in focussing the effort of the entire public sector behind a common purpose that we can hope to address Scotland's most challenging problems, such as climate change, poor health and inequalities and I hope we can continue to count on your support in taking this forward.

A copy of this letter goes to Stan Blackley, Friends of the Earth Scotland and Judith Robertson, Oxfam Scotland.

Y - ops
JK

JOHN SWINNEY