



Ben Macpherson MSP
Convener
SPCB Supported Bodies Landscape Review Committee
c/o Clerk to the Committee

Sarah Boyack MSP
11 September 2025

Dear Ben,

Response to the SPCB Supported Bodies Landscape Review

I am writing to thank you and your committee for your recent report, the Review of the SPCB Supported Bodies Landscape. The report makes an important and timely contribution to ongoing efforts to ensure that Scotland's public sector operates with greater coherence, transparency, and long-term accountability. I welcome the Review's recognition of the need to avoid duplication, improve scrutiny mechanisms, and build a more coordinated landscape of support and oversight bodies, particularly in light of ongoing fiscal pressures.

In this context, I would like to draw your attention to my Member's Bill, the Wellbeing and Sustainable Development (Scotland) Bill, currently under consideration by the Parliament's Social Justice and Social Security Committee. I believe the aims of the Bill are closely aligned with the key themes of your Review, particularly in embedding coherence across public decision-making, ensuring greater policy alignment, and establishing proportionate and effective oversight that adds value in the long-term.

One of the core issues raised by your report is the lack of shared frameworks and definitions across SPCB-supported bodies, which can contribute to fragmentation and inefficiency. The Bill addresses this directly by introducing statutory definitions of (a) sustainable development and (b) wellbeing, rooted in existing international standards and informed by extensive consultation with stakeholders. These definitions would serve as a common reference point for public bodies, improving consistency in how key national outcomes are interpreted and delivered across different sectors.

Furthermore, the Bill establishes a clear duty for public bodies, which includes the Scottish Government, local authorities, and health boards, to have due regard for the need to promote wellbeing and sustainable development in carrying out their functions. It is necessary to clarify that this is not a symbolic gesture; as part of this duty, public bodies will be required to have regard to guidance issued by the Future Generations Commissioner proposed by this Bill, discussed below, which could include guidance on what these practical steps could include. I would hope that this would support public bodies in taking practical steps towards integrating long-term thinking and joined up policy approaches in their work.

A practical example included in the Policy Memorandum is the planning of new housing developments, where I consider a wellbeing and sustainable development duty could require public bodies to consider issues such as active travel infrastructure, local food access, sustainable heating (e.g. heat pumps and heat networks), and access to green space from the outset, ensuring joined-up and future-proofed decisions.

Crucially, the Bill also proposes the creation of a Future Generations Commissioner for Scotland. This role is designed not to replicate or compete with existing oversight bodies, but to provide long-term, cross-cutting scrutiny and support for public bodies in delivering on their new duties. The Commissioner would have a range of duties, including 'reviewing law, policy and practice relating to wellbeing and sustainable development' and 'carrying out investigations into public bodies' compliance with their duty under the Bill'.

The Commissioner's mandate, as proposed by my Bill, draws heavily on the experience of the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, whose recent 2025 report has reinforced the importance of investing in prevention, nature restoration, public trust, and the integration of climate and social justice objectives.¹ These objectives align with the Scottish National Adaptation Plan and the SNAP3 Adaptation Outcomes and underlying UN Sustainable Development Goals.² The work of the Commissioner could also complement the Scottish Government's development of its National Performance Framework. The Welsh model has demonstrated the value of having a single body charged with embedding key long-term thinking across government, which is a lesson I believe Scotland can learn from.

Importantly, my proposal for the Commissioner is grounded in financial realism.³ The office would be lean and strategically focused, with an emphasis on enabling better outcomes and smarter spending by avoiding reactive and siloed policy-making. In this sense, the Bill supports the ambitions of the Landscape Review by offering a

¹ [Future Generations Report 2025 - Future Generations Wales](#)

² [Outcome Five: International Action \(IA\) - Climate change: Scottish National Adaptation Plan 2024-2029 - gov.scot](#)

³ [The siren song of financial realism | openDemocracy](#)

structured, legislative route to achieving coherence and accountability without adding unnecessary layers of complexity. The Commissioner would also provide shared guidance, tools, and evidence-based advice to reduce duplication across public bodies, support joint working, and promote smarter use of limited resources. A key opportunity in establishing a new Commissioner would be the recommendations in the Landscape review to make use of shared resources with other SPCB supported bodies to maximise efficiency.

By embedding long-term thinking, collaboration, and whole-life cost analysis into everyday decision-making, the Commissioner could help public bodies avoid waste, improve value for money, and unlock co-benefits across sectors. This approach mirrors the experience in Wales, where the Future Generations Commissioner has demonstrated that investing in wellbeing and sustainable development not only improves short term outcomes but can also lead to significant long-term savings across the public sector. Moreover, in developing the Bill I was conscious of the work of the Christie Commission which published its report in the summer of 2014. Its four pillars of People, Prevention, Performance and Partnership and its acknowledgment of financial pressures and unprecedented challenges are as relevant now as when the report was published.⁴

In addition, the Bill builds in mechanisms for reporting and review. The Commissioner would be required to publish a strategic plan every 4 years as well as an annual report (as well as to report on any investigations). Public bodies themselves would be subject to investigation and would be expected to cooperate with investigations. I envisage that many public sector bodies would report proactively on their own compliance with the duty, and to consider the opportunities and changes that would come from integrating wellbeing and sustainable development principles even though there is no requirement under the Bill for them to do so. This aligns well with your recommendation that oversight bodies have clearer lines of accountability and impact measurement.

Finally, I want to highlight that key principles, such as long-term thinking and action, prevention, integration, collaboration, and participation, the “five ways of working” that underpin the Welsh Future Generations Act, informed the development of my bill. The Welsh Commissioner’s 2025 report shows that this kind of framework, when backed by statute and leadership, can drive significant cultural change and policy improvement. My hope is that the Bill will provide Scotland with a similarly ambitious and coherent foundation for sustainable decision-making, while also contributing to our broader public body landscape.

I hope the issues set out in my letter are helpful in how I believe my bill could support and enhance the objectives set out in your review.

⁴ [KEY MESSAGES - Christie Commission on the future delivery of public services - gov.scot](#)

I am copying this letter to Collette Stevenson, Convener of the Social Justice and Social Security Committee.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Sarah Boyack". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sarah Boyack MSP