



Programme for Government

Introduction

The Scottish Government has [published](#) its Programme for Government for the coming year. In this briefing, we look at some of the commitments in relation to the Jimmy Reid Foundation's work in these areas.

The First Minister has set three missions for his government to deliver:

- Equality: Tackling poverty and protecting people from harm.
- Opportunity: Building a fair, green and growing economy.
- Community: Delivering efficient and effective public services.

Progressives would have little difficulty with these aims. As ever, the challenges come not with ambition but with delivery. It will be interesting to see if Delivery Mandate [Letters](#) to every Cabinet Secretary makes any difference. Delivery is also constrained by the public finances, and there will be more on this in the forthcoming budget.

Fair Work

Delivery was the theme of our latest [report](#), *Assessing Fair Work in Scotland*. If Scotland is to claim to be a Fair Work Nation in 2025, much more needs to be done to turn the worthy ambition into reality. While it was welcome to see such a clear statement that Fair Work is crucial to achieving social justice, there was little new on Fair Work.

Assessing Fair Work in Scotland



Extending Fair Work conditionality to grants has happened, but there was nothing about using other levers like business incentives or skills. We are still waiting for the critical policy of sectoral Fair Work agreements. Increasing the minimum pay of social care and childcare workers to £12 per hour is an incremental step in the right direction. However, it is another sticking plaster that needs sectoral

collective bargaining to address the wide range of employment issues that underpin recruitment and retention in these sectors. The National Care Service is still work in progress.

Land Reform

There was a commitment to “*Introduce a Land Reform Bill, including measures to modernise agricultural holdings.*” However, there was no detail on what would be included in that Bill or any position on some of the critical issues highlighted in the recent Reid Foundation [report](#), such as a cap on land ownership. That report called for a more radical and integrated approach to land reform in Scotland to tackle profound 21st-century policy challenges. Instead, there are commitments to consult and engage on various rural issues.



Tackling Poverty

The Scottish Government deserves credit for the Scottish Child Payment, which will lift 50,000 children out of relative poverty in Scotland this year. They have also invested heavily in other anti-poverty measures that mitigate some of the impact of UK Government cuts. The FM had committed to raising the Scottish Child Payment to £30. The Poverty Alliance said this was a “*critical missed opportunity*” and “*raising the current £25 with inflation is nowhere near enough.*” The Government also backtracked on extending free school meals to P6 and P7 pupils, delaying it from next year until 2026.

The widening of childcare provision has been welcomed as a crucial anti-poverty measure,

although trade unions point out that more needs to be done to deliver the existing commitments. The Best Start Foods programme, which provides prepaid cards to pregnant women and the mothers of infants to buy healthy foods, such as fruit and milk, will no longer be means-tested, expanding it to around 20,000 women. We highlighted other issues that need to be addressed in our Cost of Living crisis [briefing](#), although action primarily rests on the UK Government.

Housing

Living Rent welcomed the commitment to rent controls, saying, "This is a huge step towards more affordable housing and shows the leadership that we need. The government needs to listen to tenants and ensure rent controls bring rents down and force up quality." Shelter was more critical about housing generally, saying there were "no new plans to tackle homelessness, when underfunded local services are crumbling, and funding for new social homes has been cut."

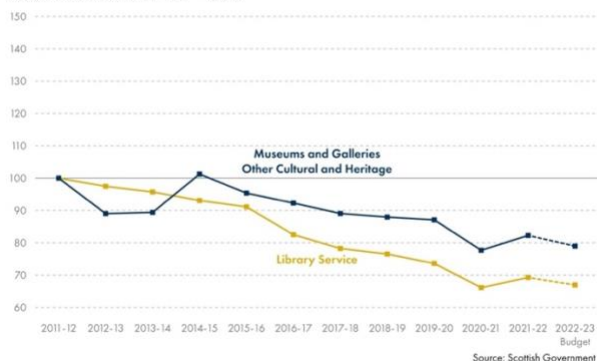
Local Government and Libraries

Libraries have a special place in the work of the Jimmy Reid Foundation, but there is no mention of this vital public service in this programme. In a recent [briefing](#), we highlighted the cuts to library services, mainly due to the underfunding of local government.

The commitment to a revised Fiscal Framework between the Scottish Government and Local Government needs to address this. The Reid Foundation [paper](#) *Building Stronger Communities* sets out a radical approach to this issue. Commitments to Community Wealth Building and place-based investment are welcome.

Local Government spend on Culture and Libraries

Real Terms 2011-12 = 100



The programme had little to say about education, and in particular the cuts facing the college sector as highlighted by [Audit Scotland](#). The EIS [said](#), "The document continued little that was new, and was based mostly on a recycling of previously announced policy."

Flexible Working

There was a commitment to "Commence the Four Day Working Week public sector pilot by the end of this calendar year, to assess the wellbeing, environmental, and productivity benefits the Four Day Working Week could bring." As we highlighted in a recent *briefing*, this is already government policy. Almost every public body in Scotland has a policy on the Four Day Week; the problem is that few have any idea of take up.

Conclusion

Government programmes tend to be aspirational rather than focus on delivery. It is a political statement rather than a business plan. Overall, the Scottish Government has been more radical with policies that don't have a hefty price tag. This is likely to be reflected in the budget. STUC General Secretary Roz Foyer welcomed parts of the package but added: "We cannot pretend this was the radical, redistributive prospectus Scotland desperately needs."

PROGRAMME FOR GOVERNMENT

"There are welcome elements within the Programme for Government from the First Minister, not least of all the pledge to raise the pay of our early years and social care workers in addition to a Housing Bill to introduce long-term rent controls. Reestablishing the Independent Living Fund and introducing a much-needed, if inadequate, premium council tax on second homes is also welcome. However, we cannot pretend this was the radical, redistributive prospectus Scotland desperately needs."

The First Minister was right on the need to pick a side. We agree. But he has done neither and sets out a misaligned Programme for Government that promotes economic growth through a pro-business, profit-driven prism and gives very little detail, if any, on redistributing wealth from the top of our society to those most in need.

Workers are the real wealth creators in our country, not the profiteers. We have already demonstrated that taxing those at the top, revaluing our land and property and introducing wealth taxes can generate £3.3 billion of extra revenue, helping to build a fairer, more equal country. This Programme for Government delivered on none of these policies.

"We would invite the Scottish Government on that journey towards a fairer nation and urgently prioritise bolder, radical measures to spread the wealth in our country that would eradicate the scourge of poverty across Scotland once and for all."

- Roz Foyer, STUC General Secretary



Jimmy Reid Foundation

The Jimmy Reid Foundation is a think tank which brings together different voices from across Scotland to make the case for economic, environmental, political and social equity and justice in Scotland and further afield.

<https://reidfoundation.scot>

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