



Briefing: The Scottish Government's Programme for Government 2022-23

Introduction

- The First Minister Nicola Sturgeon set out the Scottish Government's legislative programme for the year ahead, *A Stronger & More Resilient Scotland*,¹ in a statement dominated by the cost-of-living crisis which she framed as a "humanitarian emergency".
- She spoke of "hard choices" ahead, as inflation and extra spending on public sector pay impacted the Scottish budget, warning that it would mean "stopping some things we planned to do, to fund what is essential to support people through this crisis."
- Most of the measures announced by the Scottish Government were tightly focused on cost-of-living support, such as emergency legislation for rent freezes and banning evictions, increases to the Scottish Child Payment and Fuel Insecurity Fund, as well as Scotrail fair freezes.
- However, the First Minister took the opportunity to call for immediate action in reserved areas, urging the UK Government to reform the energy market and take action on rising energy bills, increase devolved budgets, introduce an enhanced windfall tax, while also proposing a four-nation summit to discuss the issue.
- The FM also linked the current crisis to the constitution, arguing that the Scottish Government's room for manoeuvre was limited, and that it highlighted the need for independence. She reaffirmed the intention to hold a referendum on 19th October 2023, subject to the UK Supreme Court's determination.

Tourism and Short-Term Lets

Short-Term Lets

- The Scottish Government will introduce a **Housing Bill**, in the coming year, which the First Minister said would, amongst other things, "implement key policies on short-term lets".
- However, short-term lets were not mentioned in the Programme for Government document and further clarity is required from the Scottish Government on this matter.

Tourism

- The Programme for Government was fairly light on issues relating to the tourism sector, other than the introduction of a tourist tax.
- In 2022-23, the Scottish Government will introduce a **Local Visitor Levy** which create a discretionary power for local authorities to apply a levy on overnight visitor stays in accommodation, applying in all or part of their area, to help fund relevant local activities and services.

¹ Scottish Government, *A stronger and more resilient Scotland: The Programme for Government 2022 to 2023* (2022). Url: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/stronger-more-resilient-scotland-programme-government-2022-23/>

Scottish Government Bills for 2022-23

- In addition to the 11 Bills passed this session, and the five currently in Parliament, the Scottish Government intend to introduce a further 18 in 2022-23.
- MSPs will debate the measures announced by the FM over the coming days, while the Deputy First Minister John Swinney, who is also the acting Cabinet Secretary for Finance, will provide an emergency budget review statement tomorrow.

Bills for 2022-23	
Annual Budget (No.2)	Bankruptcy and Diligence
Charities (Regulation)	Children’s Care and Justice
Circular Economy	Criminal Justice Reform
Education Reform	Housing (2 Bills)
Independence Referendum	Legal Services Regulation Reform
Local Visitor Levy	Patient Safety Commissioner
Police Complaints and Misconduct Handling	Public Health (Restrictions of Promotions)
Scottish Aggregates Levy	Trusts and Succession
Wildlife Management (Grouse)	

Opposition Response

- The Leader of the Scottish Conservatives Douglas Ross said the UK and Scottish Governments needed to do more on the current crisis but that the programme fell “woefully short of rising to the big challenges we face”. While people were struggling with their bills, the Scottish Government were continuing with an “unwanted Bill” on independence.
- Meanwhile, the Leader of Scottish Labour Anas Sarwar claimed that the Scottish Government had been absent over the cost-of-living crisis, having previously resisting a rent freeze which had been proposed by Scottish Labour.
- Scottish Lib Dem Leader Alex Cole-Hamilton said the Programme for Government was “thin gruel” and took issue with some of the flagship policies, such as the Scotrail fare freeze as this would only delays a further increase by two months.