



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Scotland's Future Forum Annual Report 2021-22

19 January 2023

Reference: SPCB (2023) Paper 7

Executive summary

1. Scotland's Futures Forum is the Scottish Parliament's futures think-tank. It is formally constituted as a limited company and is owned by the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, which is the company's sole member.
2. This paper provides an update on the Futures Forum's operations. Annex A is an annual report on its activities in 2021-22. Annex B contains the Futures Forum's audited accounts from 2021-22.
3. The SPCB is invited to note the 2021-22 annual report and accounts from Scotland's Futures Forum.

Background

4. The Futures Forum works to stimulate debate on Scotland's long-term future. It brings people together to look beyond the electoral cycle and explore the challenges and opportunities that Scotland faces.
5. Its work is governed by a board of directors that is chaired by the Presiding Officer and composed of both MSPs and non-MSPs. The MSPs currently on the board are Maggie Chapman MSP, Stuart McMillan MSP, Alex Rowley MSP and Brian Whittle MSP.
6. The non-MSP directors are Kirsten Hogg (SCVO); Diarmaid Lawlor (Scottish Futures Trust); Esther Robertson (former chair of NHS 24 and member of the Consultative Steering Group); and Sarah Munro (Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art). Full biographies are available on the [Futures Forum website](#).

7. The Futures Forum's status working at arm's length from the Parliament allows it to partner with Committees and a range of external organisations. It uses these partnerships to support MSPs and others to engage with issues in ways that are different from but complementary to parliamentary business.

Issues and options

8. The annual report and accounts cover the Futures Forum's activities in the financial year 2021-22, which covers the transition to session 6. Our board membership refreshed after the elections in May 2021, and we worked to establish new partnerships with committees and other partners in the new parliamentary context.

9. For a large proportion of the year, public health regulations prevent the holding of in-person events. Like other organisations, we adapted our approach, supporting online events where possible and carefully returning to in-person events as regulations allowed.

10. In particular, we supported the Parliament's Festival of Politics in October 2021 and held two online sessions on democratic innovations – the Climate Assembly and the Welsh Future Generations Commissioner.

11. Since the annual report period, the Futures Forum has returned to hosting in-person events more frequently. Most recently, this included a conference on taxation with the Finance and Public Administration Committee, which was attended by the Welsh Senedd Finance Committee chair and conveners of the Local Government and Economy committees.

12. We have also explored the future of democracy through events on artificial intelligence, as well as events in partnership with the Festival of Politics on disinformation

13. Overall, the work of the Futures Forum is intended to be a resource for the Parliament, and Scotland more generally, in supporting the national debate to include consideration of the long term.

Governance

14. The SPCB is the sole company member of Scotland's Futures Forum and is therefore entitled to receive reports on its activities.

Resource implications

15. The Parliament provides 100% of the Futures Forum's budget each year. In 2021-22, the Futures Forum received a budget of £146,500. This covered

the costs (including VAT) of a part-time Head of Business at grade 5 (0.8 FTE) and a Business Co-ordinator at grade 2 (0.95 FTE).

16. Both staff are employed on secondment from the Scottish Parliamentary Service and supported by Susan Duffy (Group Head of Engagement and Communications) who as Company Secretary acts as line manager for the Head of Business.

17. The funding from the SPCB also supports events and projects and the maintenance of a separate website.

18. The Futures Forum also benefits from support from the Parliamentary Service, such as in event organisation and the preparation and auditing of accounts. It works on a co-production model to access resources of external organisations.

Publication Scheme

19. It is recommended that this paper should be published in line with the SPCB's Publication Scheme.

Next steps

20. The SPCB will continue to receive reports on the Futures Forum's work on an annual basis and on request if required.

Decision

21. The SPCB is invited to note the 2021-22 annual report and accounts from Scotland's Futures Forum.

Scotland's Futures Forum

January 2023