

Scottish Government Operating Costs

Overview

The total operating costs for the Scottish Government comprise portfolio operating costs, which include all the core Scottish Government staff and associated operating costs incurred directly by each portfolio, and corporate running costs which are more efficient to run centrally such as digital, estates, procurement, finance, legal services, and HR. In line with public service reform, central services are also provided for over thirty public bodies out with the core Scottish Government.

Portfolio operating costs are aligned with the portfolio budget that they support. The Scottish Government's corporate running costs budget and the Scottish Government's corporate capital projects budget form part of the Finance and Local Government Portfolio. This provides greater transparency on the operating costs of the Scottish Government.

Through the operating costs budget, we will ensure that the organisation has the capacity and capability to support the functions of government and public services, and the delivery of the priority outcomes and objectives set by Ministers. To manage this, we must continue to reform the way in which this government delivers services to ensure they are delivered more efficiently, such as through use of shared services.

We also continue to consider the size and deployment of the workforce with some areas needing to grow to respond to pressures and others reducing in line with reform opportunities and reprioritisation of work. This must be done in a way that protects public services and the Government's priority missions.

Scottish Government workforce

The growth in Scottish Government workforce numbers in prior years has reflected the changing nature of its business following the addition of new powers and responsibilities. In addition, since early 2020, the Scottish Government workforce has responded to the impact of EU Exit and COVID-19. To support our aims of an efficient and effective workforce, and in response to the changing financial context, the Scottish Government put enhanced recruitment controls in place in April 2022 to ensure the organisation continues to deploy its resources flexibly, with any required growth focused on priority areas. Within these controls the Government has been able to respond to the conflict in Ukraine and the cost-of-living crisis, as well as the establishment of ScotWind within our wider Net Zero commitments. Current workforce plans anticipate the permanent workforce reducing in the next financial year. The enhanced recruitment controls will remain in place to support these plans and continue to reduce the size of the workforce and adjust to the operating cost budget allocated.

Workforce numbers are regularly published as part of the Scottish Government Workforce Information publication.

Scottish Government operating costs

The total operating cost budget for the Scottish Government in 2025-26 is £801.7 million. This represents 1.3 percent of the overall Scottish Budget (as measured by Total Managed Expenditure). Total operating costs are summarised in Table 1 below.

Portfolio	2023-24 Outturn £m	2024-25 Autumn Budget £m	2025-26 Budget £m
Health & Social Care	114.6	115.3	115.6
Local Government & Finance	47.2	40.4	47.8
Social Justice	82.9	57.6	61.3
Education & Skills	40.8	32.3	46.8
Justice	22.5	23.0	27.0
Transport	-	-	-
Deputy First Minister, Economy & Gaelic	95.6	95.5	93.2
Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands	136.7	139.7	144.2
Net Zero & Energy	32.9	36.3	40.6
Constitution, External Affairs & Culture	15.3	16.1	17.2
Corporate Running Costs	203.7	200.8	207.9
Total	792.3	757.0	801.7