

Catch up with Perm Sec

Published 11/06/2018

National Performance Framework

After a year of intensive consultation, the First Minister will today launch the SG's new National Performance Framework - setting out a vision for national wellbeing across a range of economic, social and environmental factors.

We've now had a decade of outcomes-based working – this is 'the way we do government' in Scotland and it is enshrined in legislation. And as a result the way we operate has become more collaborative and intelligent - crafting, co-producing and supporting the implementation of policy which reflects real people's lives with all the complexities, messiness, risk and interdependency that real life brings.

The NPF is no longer the Scottish Government's framework, it belongs to the people of Scotland and all those involved in the delivery of their ambitions. In particular, this next phase signals a new collaborative relationship between ourselves and local government in Scotland and I ask you all to invest in this.

This new NPF is an ambitious guide for all of us with 11 national outcomes, supported by 81 national indicators. It requires us to go further; to use the machinery of government to translate the complex answers and responses into real joined up public policy, one familiar with the currency and characteristics of outcomes – including wellbeing.

In short, if we are to succeed and continue to enable Scotland to flourish with a stronger inclusive economy and improved national wellbeing then for me the answer will always be – outcomes. Join the discussion on Yammer and Twitter #NPFConf18.

Civil Service Live in Glasgow

Last week I joined over 2,000 civil servants from Scottish, UK and Welsh governments and agencies in Glasgow to learn, collaborate, share experiences and build new networks at CS Live. There were over 60 exhibitors showcasing their policies and areas of work, over 150 sessions, with hundreds of speakers facilitating inspiring discussion and sparking ideas. For those of you that attended, take the time to reflect on the learning and themes that you can carry forward, and for those of you that didn't, there are further events taking place around the UK over summer.

Catch up with Perm Sec

Published 18/06/2018

Realising an equal society

Last week I attended the FM's Advisory Council on Women and Girls which is focused on building an equal society where women and girls can achieve their full potential.

It was a raw, powerful session exploring the barriers that still exist 100 years after women secured the right to vote. I spoke about the role and responsibility of the public sector in promoting attitude and culture change in the pursuit of true gender equality for Scotland.

I am proud that there are more female Senior Civil Servants in core SG since I came into post (43 per cent in March 2018, higher than the UK Civil Service) and that my own senior team is gender balanced. Our recruitment processes and talent development programmes are working – 65% of current Modern Apprentices are female, and 50% of those on the Graduate Development Programme are female. So we lead by example – but there is so much more to do for SG to be an inclusive and diverse organisation. That's why I joined SG colleagues on Saturday for Pride Edinburgh – Scotland's national LGBTI festival.

Stats to share

I wanted to highlight two reports which issued this week, and which tell a strong story for Scotland. Firstly EY's Attractiveness Survey 2018 showed that Scotland's growth rate in foreign direct investment is the highest in the UK and Scotland remains the UK's most attractive location for foreign direct investment outside of London – positive for job creation, sectors such as R&D and our wider inclusive economy.

Secondly I was pleased to see the number of people starting modern apprenticeships has increased to 27,145 in the last year – exceeding the target, and investing in the workforce of the future in this #YearofYoungPeople.

Freedom of Information

I wrote to each of you last week following publication of a report by the Scottish Information Commissioner into the SG's handling of Freedom of Information (FOI) requests. The report sets out a series of recommendations which the Government has accepted in full. You can read the Scottish Government's response [here](#). The way we handle FOI requests is not simply an administrative process, but it speaks to the wider values of our organisation and our relationship with the public and civic society. So, thank you for your efforts to improve our performance and please consider what more you and your team can do to demonstrate our commitment to openness and transparency.

Catch up with Perm Sec

Published 25/06/2018

Leading the way

I welcomed three impressive women to St Andrew's House last week to share their leadership journey with SG colleagues. Mary Pitcaithly, Chief Executive of Falkirk Council, Rose Fitzpatrick, Deputy Chief Constable at Police Scotland, and Bernadette Malone, Chief Executive of Perth and Kinross Council will shortly be moving on from their current roles. I couldn't miss the opportunity for us to tap into their vast experience.

They reflected on the importance of high quality, collaborative leadership with SG especially on the National Performance Framework and working to deliver outcomes. All three spoke about personal resilience and the principles which have guided them throughout their careers. The following reflections resonated with me:

- trust your instincts and don't compromise on personal integrity
- learn how to 'work wisely' – where can you add most value?
- importance of team work - all leaders draw on support from their teammates, especially in tough times
- we are civil servants because we want to make a difference in Scotland

Cabinet in Cumnock

Cabinet met in Cumnock last week and heard directly from members of the East Ayrshire Children and Young People Cabinet. And the issues raised at the public discussion also reflected high attendance by local schools and colleges. They included farm visits by schoolchildren, evidence of the attainment gap closing, a dangerous bridge, mental health services, ticket touting, access to services for autism, the cost of travel to Glasgow, President Trump's visit, meaningful work placements, and the impact of independence and Brexit on exports.

Celebrating success

Congratulations to our Marketing and Insight Unit which won seven golds and three silvers last week at the Star Awards for their bold and powerful campaigns across a range of policy areas. I was particularly pleased to see [REDACTED] pick up the Rising Star award for her innovative work on Year of Young People.
#proudpermsec

Summer intern

You'll have heard me talk about how we ensure our organisation hears the views of young people. This summer I am inviting a young SG employee to join my support team for four weeks. This is an informal, short-term placement to strengthen talent and career opportunities, provide experience of working at the heart of the organisation, and to learn and shape how we work here. It is open to all young people (up to age 27) and applications from those who identify as minority ethnic, LGBTI, or disabled are particularly welcome. If you meet the criteria and your line manager approves please send a short note (no more than half a side of A4) telling us who you are and why you're interested - emails marked 'Summer Intern' by 9 July please.

Royal Highland Show

It's a fantastic showcase for Scotland's food, farming and countryside attracting around 75,000 visitors - and I love the Royal Highland Show. I was delighted to meet our teams working there and the Honey Tent was a personal highlight.

Catch up with Perm Sec

Published 02/07/2018

Reshuffle

Last week I joined the First Minister at Bute House as she announced a new Cabinet and ministerial team to take forward the government's agenda. Once again we demonstrated our ability as a civil service to respond, reposition and manage these changes with finesse.

I can't think of another organisation which could respond with such speed, continuity and confidence - thank you to the teams who demonstrated their ability to turn on the head of a sixpence in supporting and communicating these changes.

The ask of us as a civil service is clear, in advising Cabinet Secretaries and Ministers in their new roles, but this is also an opportunity to hone in on Programme for Government priorities and drive forward our delivery on outcomes. More on this during the summer.

Mental Health

Good mental health and wellbeing brings value to our organisation – it makes us collectively more productive, more resilient, and more invested in the job we do. Last week I took part in an open and frank session at Victoria Quay which reflected on our mental health experiences as individuals, how this informs the culture of our organisation, and where we need to improve mental health and wellbeing support.

Like most people I have worked my way through several tough, and very stressful episodes. What helped me was the support of my line manager, on one occasion seeing a health professional, and the continuing support of my friends and family. We all have a role to play in stamping out the stigma surrounding mental health and improving our workplace culture.

Stonewall Survey

As you know our ambition is to be a world-leading, diverse employer where people can be themselves. It's vital that we understand how we're performing as an organisation on equality, diversity and inclusion and can challenge ourselves to continuously improve our policies, processes and culture.

As part of this, I encourage everyone to share their views on sexual orientation and gender identity equality via The Stonewall Index – using the unique code: XXXXXXXXXX. We all have a stake in building a culture of respect where people can bring their whole selves to work.

Atlantic Quay

I met with many of you at Atlantic Quay last month and heard your experience of accommodation issues in the context of a growing workforce. I committed to action to address these and am pleased we are increasing our operational base in central Glasgow by investing in new accommodation across four floors at 4 Atlantic Quay (AQ4) . This new office space will be ready to move into in November. Thank you all for your patience while we develop long-term solutions.

Summer recess

Finally, I want to thank each of you for your work over this intense and ambitious parliamentary term. Summer recess is not the quiet time (I'm told) it once was. But please take proper time away from the office to unwind and rest – it's important.

Catch up with Perm Sec

Published 23/07/2018

Executive Team

I've spoken before about the importance of sharing what goes on at our weekly Executive Team sessions, as part of SG2020 and being a more open, responsive and capable organisation. Last week, Professor Alan Miller, Chair of the First Minister's Advisory Group on Human Rights, spoke compellingly about the distinct leadership role of SG as an organisation and through policy development and delivery, with a particular emphasis on economic, social and environmental rights.

SG has a strong story to tell in some areas – the refreshed National Performance Framework has a clear outcome to respect, protect and fulfil human rights and live free from discrimination. Professor Miller urged us to maintain this focus, challenge ourselves to show leadership in human rights and ensure Scotland's citizens know their rights and crucially how to exercise them. In short there is no room for complacency, particularly against the backdrop of Brexit. I look forward to learning about the Advisory Group's recommendations later in the year.

Women's Development Network

I am very proud of our staff networks. They fulfil a unique and important function, across a range of areas, allowing members to build their confidence and connections. The networks are growing and strengthening, including the new Women's Development Network (WDN), launched earlier this month, helping empower women to fulfil their career aspirations and 'lift as we climb'. I look forward to getting involved myself.

Find out more at WDN or connect via Yammer or email.

New Cabinet

Over the past few weeks many of you have been meeting with Cabinet Secretaries and Ministers who are new to Government or with new portfolios. Snap! I have been hearing Ministers' appreciation of your high quality briefing and advice in these early

weeks, as they get up to speed on key policies and issues, NPF and Programme for Government priorities. I want to say a personal thank you to everyone involved in this work – another demonstration of the expertise and professionalism of our civil service.

European Championships 2018

Anticipation is building around the inaugural European Championships which kick off in Glasgow on 2 August. Many of you have been working hard on the planning and delivery of this new event, bringing top athletes from across Europe to Scotland for a multi-sport experience over 11 days. I hope you get a chance to enjoy the sporting action, the fantastic cultural programme at Festival 2018 and family events at Go Live at the Green. #TheMoment

Meanwhile...

Have you, and members of your team, had a holiday yet? It's important for each of us to take a break. #Wellbeing

Catch up with Perm Sec

Published 30/07/2018

Summer focus

My thanks to teams driving a joined-up and cohesive approach on the forthcoming Programme for Government – the level of ambition it will set and the priorities it will identify – whilst ensuring strong strategic links to the Spending Review (including staff resources) and set in the context of the refreshed National Performance Framework.

Joining up these separate, but connected, strands of work is especially important given the challenge of EU exit preparations and contingency planning, and to ensure we align our resources with priorities, and for the longer term. Ministers are already engaged in this process. And all of this work is rooted in our SG2020 aspirations to become a more open, capable and responsive organisation.

Suffrage centenary

Last week I joined the Suffrage flag relay as it tours Scotland to celebrate suffragettes and suffragists in this centenary year, including hearing from, and marching with, female prisoners at HMP Greenock and attending a preview of the National Records of Scotland's fascinating 'Malicious Mischief' exhibition.

The personal struggles of the suffrage movement still resonate across the generations. I'm sure many of you will have a connection or story to share. My own grandmother witnessed the death of suffragette Emily Davidson at Epsom Racecourse in 1913. Her story was a familiar one of the time - escaping an abusive marriage only to find herself and her children (including my mother, aged 6) in the workhouse because she couldn't work full time to pay the rent, and look after them.

She worked in domestic service most of her life, losing an arm and an eye to a doodlebug bomb in London during WWII. A redoubtable woman, she had a very positive and pretty feisty approach to life, which certainly shaped mine.

As the first female Permanent Secretary to the SG it is not lost on me that St Andrew's House sits on the site of a prison once used to imprison suffragettes. Despite the efforts of those who campaigned for suffrage, the recent #MeToo campaign shows we are still a long way from true gender equality. So as we reflect on the gains of the suffrage movement, let's all:

- keep calling out outdated practice and assumptions, especially unwritten rules, patterns, and behaviours which can shape and influence our culture
- consider what we can do to continue to press for progress in the face of prejudice, gender stereotyping and unconscious bias

Summer intern

I recently sought applications from young colleagues to undertake a summer internship within my office. I'm pleased to welcome [REDACTED] to the team for the next few weeks - giving her insight into the key issues on which we are working, and how we work, and inviting her fresh perspective and challenge along the way. Win-win situation.

Catch up with Perm Sec
20/08/2018

'Sophie' – the avatar

You've heard me talk about the importance of our organisation hearing the views of young people. Last week I opened a Year of Young People seminar at VQ – and introduced Sophie – an avatar to test policies from the perspective and experience of a child in kinship care.

Working in partnership with NHS Lothian, CELCIS, Mentor UK, and the Children's Parliament, we have developed Sophie - a ten-year old girl with a range of health, education and social needs – to help us better understand the issues facing this group of looked after children. Issues such as still getting to see her brothers, being treated the same as everyone else and worrying about her granny's health. This approach strengthens and enhances Getting It Right For Every Child, putting the rights and wellbeing of children and young people at the heart of the services that support them. This requires our services to work not only with, but for children, young people and families to give them suitable support, and offer the right help, at the right time, from the right people.

Our recently refreshed National Performance Framework endorses this approach. It focuses on outcomes, including for young people like Sophie, so that they grow up feeling safe and respected with an equal chance and opportunity at life.

Aberdeen

I was in the North East on Friday, meeting colleagues at Marine Scotland, and hearing their interests and concerns - including EU Exit, resourcing, pay and the importance of the science profession. I also met with members of the Women and Equalities Network and supporters. We spoke about growing a sustainable network and how it might develop to support and encourage greater diversity and inclusion in Marine Scotland.

I always enjoy meeting with Angela Scott and Jim Savage, Chief Executives of Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council respectively. They model collaborative leadership and demonstrate the potential and impact of strategic regional partnership working. We discussed the North East's economy, the rise of the digital sector (now the 3rd biggest in Scotland) and readiness for EU Exit. I also met with Jennifer Craw and Maggie McGinlay of Opportunity North East to hear how they are supporting growth in established sectors in the region such as oil and gas, tourism and food and drink, and stimulating new entrepreneurial opportunities including digital and bio-therapeutics.

And of course no visit to Marine Scotland is complete without a tour of a vessel. I had a fantastic time on board MPV Jura, and meeting all 17 of the crew.

Catch up with Perm Sec

Published 27/08/2018

I wrote to all colleagues on Friday following media coverage relating to the former First Minister Alex Salmond and sharing my statement on the matter.

You will appreciate that for legal reasons I am unable to say anything further at this point but I can assure you that the Scottish Government will defend its position vigorously. I shall update you as and when I can.

In line with work already underway to tackle inappropriate behaviour, and in consultation with our trade unions, we are carefully considering any issues about culture and working practices. My email to all staff sets out the routes of support available and I encourage any colleague who feels it necessary to make use of them. [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] in our HR People Advice team can assist.

SG2020

Recent events reaffirm the importance of our SG2020 conversations - conversations about how we become the open, capable and responsive organisation we need, and want to be. Every one of us bears a responsibility for owning and realising this ambition in our daily work, and that includes shaping the culture it demands.

Last week I recorded a video message for Agriculture and Rural Economy directorate staff sessions, not least to recognise their achievements and improvements. There were great examples of their efforts to improve how they work and share information with stakeholders (become more open), hearing customer

needs (more responsive) and how they have developed support systems and created learning opportunities (to become more capable). Impressive stuff.

Brexit

Last week also saw the publication of the first tranche of the UK Government's Technical Notices addressing a 'no deal' outcome from the current negotiations on the UK's exit from the European Union.

We had the opportunity to check the drafts for technical accuracy and I am grateful for colleagues' quick work on this. However, the policies and analyses set out in the notices are the UK Government's and not those the Scottish Government would necessarily endorse. Read more about the Brexit no deal risks.

Freedom of Information (FOI)

Another important part of being an open, capable and responsive organisation is the way we handle FOI. Thanks to the efforts of colleagues across the organisation, we have seen a significant improvement in our FOI performance over the past year.

The new Minister for Parliamentary Business and Veterans, Graeme Dey, joined the weekly directors network last week, to discuss the action plan to respond to the Information Commissioner's June report on our FOI process and practice. The Minister stressed the need to build on progress. He wants to hear suggestions and ideas from all colleagues who work on FOI requests on how we can improve further, delivering sustainable improvement and becoming exemplars in FOI compliance. Please email your thoughts to the FOI Unit with the title 'FOI improvement'.

Finally

A new parliamentary term is just around the corner. I liken it to the autumn school term because I always think this feels like the toughest. Continuing to demonstrate the Scottish Government's competence through measures like FOI, developing and delivering a fresh Programme for Government and the additional dimension of our readiness for exiting the EU – this is a demanding time. But I have every confidence in the organisation's talent, expertise, creativity and resilience to rise to this challenge – not least because I witness it first-hand and every day.

To prevent any comment being made which may prejudice legal action the comment facility is not available on this blog. If you wish to share an issue then please contact [REDACTED] or [REDACTED].

