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16th June 2025

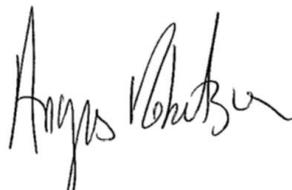
Dear Ms Jewell,

Thank you again for inviting me to provide evidence to the Senedd's Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee inquiry on the Welsh Government's International Strategy.

As you are aware, unfortunately I was unavailable to give evidence in person or via video link on 21 May. I am pleased to provide written evidence on the development of Scotland's International Strategy.

I hope you find the enclosed document useful for your ongoing inquiry.

Kind Regards,



Angus Robertson

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot

Written Evidence Submitted by the Scottish Government

WELSH SENEDD CULTURE, COMMUNICATIONS, WELSH LANGUAGE, SPORT, AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE

EVIDENCE SESSION ON WALES INTERNATIONAL STRATEGY

The Scottish Government's approach to international relations: development of its 2024 International Strategy and its three core areas of focus.

- delivery of the Strategy and how progress is monitored.
 - reporting on progress and availability of information in the public domain.
1. The Scottish Government outlined its approach to international relations in the Global Affairs Framework published in 2022.¹ The Framework sets out the principles underpinning the Scottish Government's international work and the basis on which the Scottish Government prioritises its international activity.
 2. This includes the Scottish Government's commitment that our international work would be built on a "values-based approach, consistent with our focus on fairness and inclusion" which maintains an "internationalist outlook based on cooperation".²
 3. Fundamentally, this approach is rooted in Scotland's commitment to being a Good Global Citizen. This means making a positive contribution to debates on global issues like migration, human rights, biodiversity and the climate crisis.³
 4. Scotland's International Strategy, published in January 2024, builds on the themes of the Global Affairs Framework and provides greater detail on the government's international priorities. The Strategy sets out objectives for the remainder of the current parliamentary term, focusing on three main themes:
 - Economy, trade and investment.
 - Climate change, biodiversity and renewable energy.
 - Relationships, influence and reputation.⁴
 5. The strategy outlines the key areas where the Scottish Government's international work helps to deliver the domestic objectives set out by the previous First Minister, of a more equal society, a fairer and greener economy, and excellent public services while upholding Scotland's reputation as a Good Global Citizen.⁵ See paragraph 33, below, for an explanation of how the Strategy interacts with the latest Programme for Government.

¹ [Scotland's Global Affairs Framework - gov.scot](https://www.gov.scot/publications/global-affairs-framework/pages/1-1-introduction.aspx)

² See paragraph 1 page 2 ([Scotland's Global Affairs Framework - gov.scot](https://www.gov.scot/publications/global-affairs-framework/pages/1-1-introduction.aspx))

³ See paragraph 4 page 3 ([Scotland's Global Affairs Framework - gov.scot](https://www.gov.scot/publications/global-affairs-framework/pages/1-1-introduction.aspx))

⁴ See paragraph 6 page 1 ([Scotland's International Strategy - gov.scot](https://www.gov.scot/publications/international-strategy/pages/1-1-introduction.aspx))

⁵ See paragraph 4 page 3 ([Scotland's International Strategy - gov.scot](https://www.gov.scot/publications/international-strategy/pages/1-1-introduction.aspx))

6. Progress on the strategy is monitored by the Scottish Government's Directorate for Culture and External Affairs with oversight through an international board led by directors, other government officials and public bodies in the Scottish administration with international interests. A report on our progress against the three themes outlined in the strategy will be published in late 2025. The Scottish Government has previously published annual reports on the achievements of our international network. The most recent, for 2023-24, can be found on the Scottish Government website.⁶

How the Scottish Government ensures that its feminist approach to international relations is incorporated into the development and delivery of international relations activity.

7. The Scottish Government supports a Feminist Approach to International Relations, as outlined in our FAIR Strategy position paper in 2023.⁷ This approach aims to ensure that our work abroad, and at home, delivers on the Sustainable Development Goals and achieves fairer and more equitable outcomes on global issues such as the rights of women and girls, climate and biodiversity loss.
8. This approach is embedded into the core values of the International Strategy and informs the way we approach global issues.⁸ This means we aim to implement a whole of Government approach and continually review our policies and programmes, where they have an international dimension, to ensure they reflect feminist principles.
9. A notable example of where these feminist principles have been successfully applied is our International Development programmes. We take a human-rights and a feminist approach to this work, underpinned by bespoke International Development Principles.⁹ Our approach to international development is therefore one that prioritises partner led and inclusive programmes that maintain projects that contribute to gender equality and support marginalised groups such as women and girls.¹⁰

The role of the Scottish Government's overseas offices in delivering its international priorities.

10. The Scottish Government's international network plays a vital role in delivering the Government's priorities across all key themes of the strategy. Located in London, Brussels, Dublin, Berlin, Paris, Copenhagen, Ottawa, Washington D.C and Beijing, these offices work alongside Scottish Development International's (SDI) network of more than 30 trade and investment offices in 23 countries across the globe.¹¹

⁶ [International Network Annual Report: 2023-24](#)

⁷ [Feminist Approach to International Relations](#)

⁸ See section 1.3 paragraph 8 page 3 ([Scotland's International Strategy - gov.scot](#))

⁹ [International development review - principles - gov.scot](#)

¹⁰ See page 6 ([Scotland's International Strategy - gov.scot](#))

¹¹ See "Network Overview" page 8 ([Scotland's International Network - International network: annual report 2023-2024 - gov.scot](#))

11. Their role includes attracting investment, creating opportunities for businesses and developing people to people links that promote Scotland's cultural sector and economy. The network does this by engaging with host governments, international organisations and businesses to facilitate high-level engagement and to provide a base for Scottish public sector and commercial stakeholders to interact with international partners.
12. Through these engagements, the Scottish Government has been able to build a better understanding of common challenges and priorities with international partners on issues such as climate change, wellbeing economy, culture and trade. This helps us to develop new cultural and commercial projects and grow partnerships with partner countries. Through our people-to-people engagement we aim to encourage people to come to live and work, study, visit and do business in Scotland.

How the Scottish Government works with the UK Government and UK-wide agencies on delivery.

13. As the Committee are aware, the 2013 Memorandum of Understanding¹² (specifically, the Concordat on International Relations) on how Devolved Governments can act internationally recognises our legitimate interest in aspects of international relations.
14. While the UK Government reserves the power to develop and deliver foreign policy on behalf of the UK, the Scottish Government and its Ministers have an interest, particularly where it has a direct or indirect impact on areas that are devolved in certain areas of international engagement. This includes, "international and European policy making in relation to devolved matters, notably where implementing action by the devolved administrations may be required"¹³.
15. Also included are aspects of trade and investment, the transition to net zero, higher education, culture, and promoting Scotland's global reputation. Some recent examples of practical and constructive engagement and joint working between the Scottish and UK Government, on issues connected to the themes of the International Strategy are: supporting displaced Ukrainians; Green Freeports¹⁴ and Investment Zones.¹⁵
16. Officials from both the UK and Scottish Governments, including officials based in Scotland's international offices, work together to ensure that Scottish Ministers can conduct their legitimate international activities. Our officials have regular contact with UK counterparts on the development of Scottish Government international work and overseas programmes. UK Government officials should also inform and involve Scottish Government officials on

¹² [Devolution: memorandum of understanding and supplementary agreement - GOV.UK](#)

¹³ See paragraph 18 ([MoU between the UK and the Devolved Administrations.pdf](#))

¹⁴ [Green freeports - Cities and regions - gov.scot](#)

¹⁵ [Two Scottish Investment Zones announced - gov.scot](#)

international agreements and structures which touch on devolved policy matters.¹⁶

17. While intergovernmental relations (IGR) function reasonably well on the day to day delivery of international activity, there remains room for improvement including in communication between Whitehall Departments and their Scottish Government counterparts. We are actively considering how to make improvements in how international matters are considered in the IGR space. In addition, there is scope for the FCDO to consider more actively how it promotes and highlights the devolved nations overseas, especially in places where there is no or limited devolved presence. These are issues we are discussing with Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Executive counterparts as well as with the UK Government.

How the Scottish Government works with stakeholders on delivery.

18. The Scottish Government's policy teams, international offices and colleagues in the SDI network all engage with stakeholders on a regular basis to deliver our international objectives for the benefit of the people of Scotland.

19. Stakeholder engagement on delivery occurs across all three themes of the International Strategy. An example of this in the Reputation, Influence and Relationships strand is our aim to strengthen links with public sector and third sector organisations through a variety of formal and informal agreements, partnerships and events. These activities seek to support our "internationally recognised cultural and higher education sectors" and networks that have "a connection and affinity for Scotland, through business links, the Scottish diaspora, and international alumni of Scottish higher education institutions".¹⁷

20. In addition to this, Brand Scotland, a "cross-organisational partnership", aims to bring together "the marketing and communications efforts of the Scottish Government, key public sector organisations and wider partners behind a shared brand narrative". This approach aims to provide coherent and consistent communications that reinforce positive messages about Scotland internationally, which in turn supports the growth of Scotland's economy.¹⁸

21. On international development, our policy team works with a range of in-country stakeholders (e.g. civil society organisations, universities, schools and health services), investing in projects which focus on sustainable development and climate adaptation. Through our new approach (aligning with our International Development Principles and taking a feminist approach), we aim "equalise power between Scotland and its partner countries; Malawi, Rwanda, Zambia and Pakistan".¹⁹

¹⁶ See annex D1 ([MoU between the UK and the Devolved Administrations.pdf](#))

¹⁷ See paragraph 5 page 6 ([Scotland's International Strategy - gov.scot](#))

¹⁸ See sections 4.1 to 4.3 page 6 ([Scotland's International Strategy - gov.scot](#))

¹⁹ [How we work - International development - gov.scot](#)

The Scottish Government's approach to the development of additional strategies and how they supplement its main strategy.

22. The Arctic Connections Policy Framework and the Scottish Connections Framework are examples of geographical and thematic policy statements that guide Scottish Government international activity. These specific frameworks, as well as the principle of geographic and/or thematic areas of interest, are incorporated into the broader overarching International Strategy.
23. The Arctic Connections Framework was launched in 2019 as a prospectus for knowledge and policy exchange across a wide range of devolved policy areas with our Arctic partners. Under the framework, which was developed in partnership with an expert advisory panel, the Arctic Connections fund was created to support projects and activities promoted by third sector and community-based organisations that raise awareness of Scottish-Arctic links and create new opportunities for international collaboration with the Arctic.²⁰
24. The International Strategy committed the Scottish Government to “evaluate the impact of the Arctic Connections policy framework before the end of the current parliamentary session in order to inform the future direction of Scotland’s Arctic policy and engagement.”²¹
25. The Scottish Government and SDI network of offices have engaged extensively with our diaspora as part of their objective to promote Scotland overseas. The development of the Scottish Connections Framework in 2023 emphasises the importance of Scotland’s diaspora community to improving and expanding our global connections. Through engagement we hope to build on these people-to-people relationships for the benefit of Scotland and diaspora communities.²²
26. Our approach has been to regard the diaspora community as self-selecting; therefore, our definition includes those with historic family connections to Scotland, those who have lived here, worked or studied here or those who just have an affinity with Scotland. The International Strategy reaffirms the Scottish Government’s desire to work closely with diaspora groups, consolidate the links already established, and to create a more vibrant and ambitious network of connections.²³
27. Harnessing these connections plays an important role in promoting Scottish businesses, culture and Scotland’s indigenous languages, Scots and Gaelic, both of which are central to Scotland’s cultural heritage.²⁴ Through annual events such as Tartan Week in New York, we are able to leverage Scotland’s connections with North America to celebrate our culture and heritage.

²⁰ [Arctic Connections: Scotland's Arctic policy framework - gov.scot](#)

²¹ See section 1.5 “Our Near Neighbourhood” page 3 ([Scotland's International Strategy - gov.scot](#))

²² See “Introduction” page 1 ([Scottish Connections Framework - gov.scot](#))

²³ See section 4.4 “ Scottish Connections” ([Scotland's International Strategy - gov.scot](#))

²⁴ See “Scotland’s Culture” page 3 ([Scottish Connections Framework - gov.scot](#))

How the Scottish Government's international relations are resourced.

28. The Scottish Government's international work is resourced through funds allocated by Ministers in the Scottish Budget. The external affairs portfolio budget is managed by the Directorate for Culture and External Affairs and the EU Directorate. Other Directorates in other portfolios are also resourced for international engagement to support domestic policies, notably the Directorate for International Trade and Investment and, within the DG Economy group, funding allocated through Scottish Enterprise to support the work of SDI. A breakdown of Directorate budgets can be found at the Scottish Government website.²⁵ However, this does not provide an exact figure for all aspects of internationally facing policy work or engagement.
29. The annual fiscal resource budget for the Scottish Government international offices in 2025-26 is approximately £7.2 million. This includes our two standalone Scotland House offices in London and Brussels plus the international offices located on FCDO platforms. This figure does not include Scottish Development International offices who maintain their own network to promote trade and investment.²⁶
30. Our International Development work focuses on a small but targeted group of partner led programmes in Malawi, Rwanda, Zambia and Pakistan to help those countries respond to global challenges and achieve the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. In the period 2021 to 2026 the budget for the International Development Fund (IDF), established in 2005, is forecast to rise from around £10 million in 2021 to £15 million by mid-2026.²⁷
31. We also respond to humanitarian crises globally, with support, principally through our Humanitarian Emergency Panel, with a sustained budget of £1 million. And we support a separate Climate Justice Fund, which includes innovative funding for Loss and Damage, with a budget of £36 million over this Parliament to support climate justice in the Global South.

The Scottish Government's international relations priorities and areas of focus for the next 12 months.

32. The International Strategy details the overall ambition for Scotland's international work from the time of publication, January 2024, up to the end of the current Parliament in May 2026. The Scottish Government's priorities for the period 2025-26 are set out in the Programme for Government (PfG). The current PfG was published by the First Minister on 6 May 2025 and includes a number of commitments that align with the broad themes of the International Strategy.

²⁵ [The Scottish Government Consolidated Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2024 - gov.scot](#)

²⁶ See page 8 ([Scotland's International Network - International network: annual report 2023-2024 - gov.scot](#))

²⁷ See paragraphs 2-3 ([International development - gov.scot](#))

33. For example, aligned to the theme of Economy, Trade and Investment, the First Minister has prioritised growing Scotland’s economy by attracting inward investment and expanding SDI support to maximise Scottish businesses opportunities in overseas markets. This is detailed in the Global Competitiveness Six Point Plan in the PfG.²⁸
34. On Climate and Renewable Energy, the PfG prioritises seeking new investment for renewable energy projects, developing new supply chains for offshore wind projects as well as a commitment to supporting global action on Climate Justice. This includes “leveraging our presidency of Regions4 and co-chair position in Under2, to drive forward ambition and implement bold climate action” and investing “£36 million over this Parliament to support climate justice” in the Global South.²⁹
35. On child poverty, we are clear that our commitment to upholding and promoting rights does not stop at a border. The PfG includes the commitment that we will not turn our backs on those overseas who need assistance – keeping our promise to countries across the Global South to grow our international development budget to £15 million per annum and providing £1 million for humanitarian crises.
36. In addition, we will continue to develop “legislation to incorporate certain international human rights treaties into Scots law”³⁰ to ensure Scotland is a fairer and more equal country and to take action to eradicate Child Poverty, a key commitment of the First Minister’s administration.

Scottish Government

Directorate for Culture and External Affairs
May 2025

²⁸ See page 2 ([Programme for Government 2025 to 2026 - gov.scot](#))

²⁹ See page 4 ([Programme for Government 2025 to 2026 - gov.scot](#))

³⁰ See page 3 ([Programme for Government 2025 to 2026 - gov.scot](#))