

# ALL POINTS NORTH: THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT'S NORDIC BALTIC POLICY STATEMENT



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## MINISTERIAL FOREWORD



I believe the time is right for us to renew the statement, not least to build on the substantial exchange which has happened in the last three years, for example the introduction of the First Minister's Baby Box Initiative which builds on the successful Finnish model, or the signing of our Tourism Memorandum of Understanding with Iceland.

More substantially however, the context in which we operate has changed profoundly.

In June 2016, the United Kingdom as a whole voted to leave the European Union. However in Scotland, we voted overwhelmingly by 62% to 38% in favour of remaining. Now that negotiations are underway for the UK to leave, it remains more important than ever for us to continue to develop forward looking relationships with countries in the European Union and beyond.

Instead of turning inwards as a result of the EU referendum result, we will press on with delivering against the aims of our Economic Strategy and our International Framework which promote smart, sustainable and inclusive economic growth for Scotland and help us to influence the world around us.

European and international engagement will remain a key priority for the Scottish Government in the years ahead. That will include developing the warm relationships we are committed to under this refreshed Nordic Baltic policy statement.

### **Dr Alasdair Allan**

Minister for International Development and Europe

September 2017

Scotland is a country with a strong reputation as an outward-facing European nation. From our location in the northwest corner of the continent, we have always looked outwards building strong cultural, economic and social links with our neighbours across the continent.

This is especially the case with our Nordic and Baltic neighbours where historic and contemporary connections continue to shape the lives of citizens in our countries. The publication of our first ever Nordic Baltic Policy Statement in March 2014 by our Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs, Fiona Hyslop MSP, sought to bring these connections together and outline areas of further cooperation and mutual policy exchange for the future.

I am pleased to be able to continue this work. Since taking up post in 2016 as Minister for International Development and Europe, I have worked to promote and forge new links between Scotland and our neighbours in Scandinavia and the Baltic region through visits to the region and engagement with businesses, governments and civic society in the region.

## INTRODUCTION

The Scottish Government aims to strengthen our engagement with the Nordic and Baltic countries in order to promote greater collaboration, cooperation, investment and policy transfer between our countries.

### **Background**

In March 2014, the Scottish Government launched our first ever Nordic Baltic Policy Statement, with the aim of strengthening our relationships with countries in the Nordic and Baltic regions, bringing together various strands of engagement which had been undertaken with Nordic and Baltic countries. For example, a visit by the Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs, Fiona Hyslop MSP, to Copenhagen in 2013, exploring opportunities for collaboration on architecture and culture and staff exchanges with Iceland around the Scottish planning experience in developing its national spatial strategy,

The Statement has provided a framework for our engagement with the region in the period since launch. We have now decided to update the statement to take account of the changed international context we are now operating within.

The outcome of the UK's referendum on membership of the European Union where, despite the UK voting to leave, Scotland as a whole voted to remain, has led to a period of uncertainty at UK level about our future relationship with Europe. It has also led to uncertainty elsewhere in Europe. The Scottish Government recognises that whatever the outcome is, it is of strategic importance to continue to develop and grow our bilateral relationships.

Engagement with our Nordic and Baltic partners will therefore continue to be a priority. It is important to stress that our commitment to pursue innovative and sustainable solutions to shared challenges will form the cornerstone of future relationships between our governments and citizens.

### **Why the Nordic and Baltic countries?**

Scotland enjoys a long history of economic, social, cultural and political engagement with the Nordic and Baltic regions. Our countries enjoy parallels in many respects, based on the northern periphery of Europe with similar topographies, a mixture of urban and rural communities and many similar socio-economic traits.

We have cooperated with Nordic and Baltic countries for over 20 years on a wide range of policies and initiatives, reflecting the shared challenges and opportunities we face.

Globally, the Nordic and Baltic countries are established leaders across many areas, such as human rights, the use of digital technology and innovation in energy production, with the Nordic countries notable for their social welfare model.

Strengthening these connections is of long term strategic importance to the Scottish Government and supports the aims and objectives of our International Framework.

## Case Study One: The First Minister's Baby Box Initiative

Finland's successful maternity package model, which includes the offer of a 'Baby Box' has long been admired across the world. Introduced in 1937, when infant mortality rates were high, the package was initially available only to families with low incomes but was soon rolled out to all expectant mothers on the condition they attended antenatal clinics and doctor appointments before the fourth month of pregnancy. 80 years on, expectant parents are given the option of a grant or the Baby Box however over 95% opt for the latter, as it is of both practical and sentimental value.

Inspired by the hugely successful Finnish model and committed to tackling inequality, the First Minister announced in April 2016 *"Every newborn in Scotland will be entitled to a 'Baby Box', offering essential items for a child's first weeks - adapting the successful Finnish model which has helped to improve lives for babies and toddlers."*

The Scottish Government ran a successful three month trial of pilot schemes in Clackmannanshire and Orkney, areas which were picked for their geographical spread and the diversity of their populations. All babies due between 1 January and 31 March across areas which were picked, allowed us to gather feedback from parents on their use of the Box as a safe-sleeping space and on contents. During the pilot, 130 Baby Boxes were distributed in Clackmannanshire and 59 in Orkney.

The Scottish Government began registration for the full rollout of the Baby Box initiative from 15 June 2017 with all new-born babies in Scotland due on or after 15 August 2017 being eligible to receive a Baby Box. The box includes different essential items for a child's first weeks and months to support parents. It is also suitable for babies to sleep in. The Baby Box concept is also intended to encourage engagement by expectant mothers with maternity and antenatal services.

The Scottish Government is committed to doing everything it can to give our children the best possible start in life. Scotland's Baby Box has a key role to play in that, sending a strong signal of support to families right from the start of a child's life.

It forms part of a wider programme of measures in children's early years to tackle inequality, improving health and supporting parents. Baby Boxes have already been introduced and implemented in a range of countries around the world - they have a proven track record of delivering on issues including encouraging better and earlier engagement among women with maternal health services.



## What can Scotland offer?

Our 2017-18 Programme for Government underpins Scotland's reputation as a progressive, outward facing European country ready to tackle the challenges and seize the opportunities presented by the 21st century.

We enjoy leadership positions in many sectors such as financial technology (FinTech), advanced manufacturing, life sciences and creative industries, and are internationally renowned for the quality of our academic institutions, research and innovation, and scientific expertise more generally.

These areas, combined with our commitment to champion innovation in the low carbon economy plus aspects of health, education and social security, present new and on-going opportunities for knowledge exchange and collaboration with international partners.



## Delivering against Scottish Government objectives

The Scottish Government has a strong and consistent commitment to international engagement. Our International Framework sets out how our international work supports the Government's central purpose of creating a more successful country, with opportunities for all to flourish through increasing sustainable economic growth.

While the EU referendum outcome and consequential decision to leave the EU have a significant impact on the international context, the strategic objectives in our International Framework remain unchanged

The Nordic Baltic Policy Statement supports the aims and strategic objectives of the Scottish Government's International Framework. By building on our existing links with Nordic and Baltic countries, we will learn from each other's good practice and innovation in social and other policy, helping to:

- Strengthen our **external relationships**, partnerships, roles and networks;
- Build our reputation and **international attractiveness**, boosting our trade and investment; and
- Enhance our **global outlook** to set the domestic conditions for success;
- Encourage engagement with the European Union and **protecting Scotland's place in Europe**.

## EXPERIENCE SO FAR

The original Nordic Baltic Policy Statement launched in 2014 has been a useful tool in encouraging connections and shaping engagement with the region. Organisations such as Nordic Horizons have been instrumental in promoting these links to broader civic society, while Ministers and

policy makers within the Scottish Government have enhanced cooperation through facilitating inward and outward visits, policy research and evaluations and utilising formal and informal networks. This document highlights case studies showcasing examples across a variety of policy areas.

### Case Study Two:

#### Developing Links on architecture, the built environment and community engagement

The Scottish Government's Architecture and Place Team has developed strong links with counterpart organisations in Denmark as a result of the Nordic/Baltic Strategy.

In October 2015, the Chief Architect chaired a Nordic Horizons Workshop at the Scottish Government's offices on the work of GivRum, a Copenhagen based third-sector organisation, which specialises in renovating redundant and derelict buildings for community and cultural uses. GivRum operates a knowledge exchange network entitled 'CityLink' and aims to connect communities at a local, national and transnational level to strengthen social cohesion by bringing together practitioners in cultural development, architects and others to focus on city-wide challenges through talks, exhibitions and events. Edinburgh was the host city for a CityLink programme organised by GivRum (also sponsored by Edinburgh City Council) with a range of collaborators in Edinburgh.

Scottish Government officials have maintained close links with GivRum, leading to their participation in the 'Seeding Success' conference organised by Architecture and Design Scotland (A+DS). The event at Paisley Town Hall highlighted work undertaken by communities across Scotland on the Government funded 'Stalled Spaces Scotland' programme, a 2014 legacy project which has been rolled out by A+DS. A 'Stalled Spaces Scotland' toolkit was launched at the event to help other communities and local authorities to develop their own projects to bring life back into stalled or vacant spaces. There are therefore close parallels with the work of GivRum in Copenhagen.

GivRum have now invited the Scottish Government and other Scottish partners to participate in the next CityLink festival in Copenhagen in September 2017. Scottish participants will present on the 'Place Standard', a Scottish Government tool for engagement on place community development (alongside other partners A+DS and NHS Health Scotland). The Place Standard tool is transforming the way community engagement is undertaken and is attracting significant international interest. Taking part in the 'CityLink' event in Copenhagen in September provides an excellent opportunity to showcase the Place Standard as well as furthering our wider commitments to promote community empowerment and engage on key policies with our Nordic partners in line with this policy statement.

## LOOKING AHEAD

Much has been achieved already. But there is potential to achieve much more in the years ahead. This policy statement is supported by the highest levels of the Scottish Government. Scottish Ministers are committed to providing strategic leadership, resources and support for policy exchange with our Nordic and Baltic partners. In doing so we shall learn lessons from the first phase of the policy statement – work undertaken during the initial period has focused heavily on joint initiatives which have delivered substantial value, and inward policy exchange from the region.

Going forward, we should continue to promote opportunities for outward policy exchange and also be proactive in promoting successful Scottish policies overseas.

Ministers will continue to act as the voice of Scotland during their engagements with Nordic and Baltic countries to ensure that Scotland fully benefits from the reciprocal opportunities available and that our Nordic and Baltic partners can in turn benefit from the expertise, skills and knowledge we have to offer.

### Promoting stronger bilateral links with the countries in the region

We will look for opportunities to build on the strong connections we enjoy with governments and organisations within the region over the period of the next policy statement as outlined previously

Scotland intends to maintain strong bilateral links with all the countries in the region. We are particularly keen to develop stronger connections with Latvia and Lithuania. To promote further activity with these countries, the Scottish Government will strategically increase Ministerial and official level engagement as a priority within the period of this statement.

We will utilise our expanding overseas presence and Scotland House in London to facilitate direct engagement with Governments in the region and host sessions to promote policy exchange.

### To promote our relationship with Norway, we will:

- cooperate via Marine Scotland on fisheries control matters and to ensure sustainable fishing, as well as engagement through our participation in international fisheries negotiations.
- engage with Norwegian counterparts around new initiatives and approaches on Person Centred Care, including working with the Norwegian Institute for Public Health on #WMTY17 (What Matters to You). Following a successful first year, the Danish Society for Patient Safety is now participating in the initiative in 2017.
- participate, via Marine Scotland Science officials, in 'Blue-Action', an EU H2020-programme focused on improving our understanding of Arctic weather and climate, and their global effects. The project provides a formal base for continued collaboration with colleagues in Faroe Islands, Norway and around Scotland, to observe circulation in the Faroe-Shetland Channel.
- build on our long-standing and excellent relationship, through our Nordic/Baltic Strategy, and Scotland-Norway Memorandum of Understanding for Aquaculture (signed in 2009) on co-operation and best practice in Aquaculture – the first ever bilateral MoU signed between Scotland and any other aquaculture nation.
- support information sharing and collaboration to improve the sustainable management of the global salmon farming sector, along with Norway, through a Joint Statement of Ministers (Norway, Scotland, Chile, Canada) signed in Trondheim in August 2015.

- build on our First Minister's recent announcement to provide financial support to the Acorn Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) Project in Aberdeenshire by exploring opportunities to learn from Norway in CCS, particularly in relation to its Sleipner project which has stored 17 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> deep beneath the Norwegian North Sea, and its new CCS projects proposed in the offshore Smeaheia area, as we continue to provide leadership on carbon capture on storage within the UK.

**To promote our relationship with Sweden, we will:**

- engage with counterparts in Sweden's Försäkringskassan on specific aspects of disability benefits as part of the complex transformational change programme to deliver social security devolution in Scotland.
- participate in the International Forum on Quality and Safety in Healthcare hosted in Gothenburg, including the presentation of workshop sessions and posters on a range of work in Scotland.
- look for opportunities to learn about Sweden's well known model of shared parenting.
- explore opportunities to learn from Sweden's world class bottle return scheme as the Scottish Government take forward our own plans to introduce a deposit return scheme.

**To promote our relationship with Finland, we will:**

- look for opportunities to learn lessons from Finland's pilot of a universal basic income.
- explore how Finland has closed the socio-economic attainment gap in education, displaying strong overall performance and, equally important, demonstrating that a disadvantaged socio-economic background does not necessarily result in poor performance at school.

**To promote our relationship with Denmark, we will:**

- engage and learn from Denmark in order to progress our ambitions for district heating and Scotland's Energy Efficiency Programme.
- explore current practice in Denmark around broader social issues, for example Scottish Government officials working on gender recognition in law are keen to look at the approach taken by the Danes.
- engage with Danish counterparts on specific aspects of disability benefit delivery within the country.
- participate in the Districts of Creativity (DC) network involved in promoting creativity, entrepreneurship and innovation along with the Central Denmark region and Tempere in Finland.

**To promote our relationship with Iceland, we will:**

- continue to work with the Arctic Circle Secretariat based in Reykjavik to bring together Scottish strands of work related to the Arctic, including Ministerial participation at the Arctic Circle Assembly and the hosting of an Arctic Forum in Edinburgh in 2017;
- continue to cooperate on tourism issues following the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding in 2016;
- work along with other European countries to review the Barnahus concept for initial support and interviews for vulnerable child witnesses, playing an active part in the project group looking at the lessons from the various Barnahus models
- share experience in national spatial planning – including expertise in specific sectors such as renewable energy – and at city scale, for example with the recent study visit of Reykjavik city planners to key development sites and infrastructure projects in Edinburgh and Glasgow.

**To promote our relationship with Estonia, we will:**

- cooperate extensively on digital transformation issues with Estonia. This policy exchange is mutual, with Estonian Government Officials taking a close interest in the Scottish Government's CivTech® pilot to drive innovation in the public sector.
- work in partnership with others to work with the Estonian Government on the Digital Health Society (DHS) Declaration. Its main focus is related to the free flow of data in the European Union and will develop a shared vision between policy-makers, citizens, health professionals, scientists, companies and payers, about the strategies and actions to achieve the digital transformation of healthcare systems.
- second a Marine Scotland official to the Estonian Permanent Representation to the European Union during its Presidency.

**To promote our relationship with Latvia, we will:**

- explore new opportunities for bilateral engagement, particularly in the fields of trade and investment, innovation, environment and culture.

**To promote our relationship with Lithuania, we will**

- explore new opportunities for bilateral engagement, particularly in the fields of innovation and environment, as the Lithuanian government has prioritised innovation and a shift to a knowledge-based economy. Going forward, this may present opportunities for potential joint initiatives or for Scottish organisations to play a role in this work.



### Case Study Three: Nordic Horizons

Nordic Horizons is an informal group of Scottish professionals who want to raise the standard of knowledge and debate about life and policy in the Nordic nations.

The group has received funding from the Scottish Government since 2012 and have undertaken a broad programme of work which includes hosting public meetings so Nordic policy makers, specialists and professionals can discuss how they do things with decision-makers, practitioners, MSPs, academics and the interested public in Scotland. They provide a platform for exchange of knowledge and experiences between Scotland and countries in the Nordic region.

They typically hold between five and six events per year, and in 2016-17 organised a highly successful event on 'Scotland after Brexit' with six speakers from every Nordic state attracting an audience of more than 300 people. A book of their contributions – edited by the groups Chair, Lesley Riddoch, and the late Paddy Bort – has been published by Luath press.

In 2017, the group will present three case studies at the Arctic Circle Assembly in Iceland of social enterprise projects in rural and island areas of Scotland that are rooted in community ownership. This opportunity provides a platform for Scottish experts to take their experiences to a Nordic country, promote Scottish practice in supporting sustainable economic development, and supports the Scottish Government's work on Scotland and the High North.

To enhance its broader work on policy exchange, the group is enhancing the 'knowledge exchange' potential of events by sharing Scottish as well as Nordic experiences, and dealing with negative as well as positive experiences to include 'lessons learned' by policy makers.

Since its publication, the Nordic Horizons group has made a substantial contribution to the aims of the Scottish Government's Nordic Baltic Policy Statement.



### Continuing to work on cross border and multi-country initiatives with partners across the region in areas such as:

#### Scotland and the Arctic

Scotland – as a close neighbour of the Arctic states, including the Nordic countries – has a key interest in developments in the High North. The Scottish Government recognises the importance of the Arctic to the global environment and is committed to playing its part in contributing to the protection and sustainable development of the region.

The nature of Scotland's remote geography in some places means that we are often confronted by policy challenges similar to those within the wider Arctic region. This is particularly relevant in relation to issues such as managing our natural resources and ensuring the sustainability of rural and coastal communities.

The Scottish Government is therefore committed to exploring opportunities for knowledge exchange, the sharing of best practice and the promotion for innovative joint solutions with countries in the region.

We have also been keen to promote this work internationally. In October 2016, the First Minister gave a keynote speech to the Arctic Circle Assembly in Reykjavik where she outlined this Government's commitment to cooperating with international partners on issues of relevance to the Arctic and highlighted areas where Scotland can play a valuable role.

The Scottish Government's response in March 2017 to the UK Parliament's Scottish Affairs Committee inquiry on Scotland and the High North sets out further detail on where our interests lie.

Looking ahead, the Scottish Government is committed to continuing to explore ways to deepen our engagement on Arctic issues and enhance our relationships with the Arctic states. This includes high level attendance at the Arctic Circle Assembly and the hosting of an Arctic Circle Forum on 'Scotland and the new North' in Edinburgh in 2017.

#### Culture

Supporting 'Follow the Vikings', a four year Creative Europe funded project which celebrates Viking heritage throughout Europe with the aim of making it more accessible to a world-wide audience. The project focuses on creativity and culture and is led by the Shetland Amenity Trust in partnership with 14 organisations from across Europe, including organisations from Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden.

#### Health

Participation by Scottish Government and representatives of NHSScotland and the Scottish Ambulance Service in the IHI Health Improvement Alliance Europe, a coalition of progressive leaders united for change, driven by collaboration, and focused on achieving health and healthcare results. The European Alliance is an opportunity for healthcare providers from across Europe to meet and share best practice in Quality Improvement, safety and person centred care. Norway, Sweden, Finland and Denmark are represented on the group.

#### Higher Education

The Scottish Government supports Scotland's universities to develop and maintain strong and productive relationship with our partners in Nordic and Baltic countries as well as across the rest of the EU. We support our students and staff to gain experience of studying and working in Nordic and Baltic countries supported as appropriate by schemes such as Erasmus+.

Through participation in international and European research collaborations, Scotland has secured significant funding from European research programmes, reflecting the quality of our research. One example of a long term research partnership is the Centre for Russian, Central and East European Studies (CRCEES) established in 2006 as an inter-institutional Centre of Excellence in Russian, Central and East European language-based area studies led by the University of Glasgow. CRCEES's international partners include the Centre for Baltic Studies at the University of Tartu in Estonia and Jagiellonian University in Poland.

### Promote the policy statement amongst our civil society partners and offer support for this where appropriate

It is important to stress that the delivery of the Scottish Government's continued ambitions for Nordic and Baltic engagement will only be fully realised through the support and promotion of the policy statement across Scottish society, including the business community, the public sector and wider civil society.

### Continue to fund Nordic Horizons as part of this promotion work

The Scottish Government will continue to fund Nordic Horizons, an informal group of Scottish professionals, which we have supported since 2012. Nordic Horizons focus on raising the standard of knowledge and debate about life and policy in the Nordic nations across Scottish society. The Scottish Government has worked with them to bring Nordic experts to Scotland to engage with government officials and other policy makers and influencers. In recent years, Nordic Horizons have also facilitated overseas events with Scottish policy makers, which support the aim of this policy statement by promoting mutual policy exchange.

### Promote policy exchange during Scottish Government policy development

Within the Scottish Government, the Nordic Policy Network promotes engagement across policy areas with the Nordic countries. Officials have worked to promote the network as a platform for knowledge exchange and to promote best practice examples from Nordic countries. As the group has matured, it has led to Scottish officials sharing policy learning from Scotland to Nordic colleagues and learning much in exchange from those Nordic colleagues.

To further promote the aims of the Nordic Baltic Policy Statement, we will widen the focus of the group to incorporate the Baltic region within its activities and promote policy exchanges by facilitating dialogues with policy experts from the Nordic and Baltic countries.

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of this policy statement is to promote and highlight Scottish engagement with the Nordic and Baltic region. There will be many more examples from across all sectors of Scottish society which have not been captured here, but are equally as valid and worthwhile.

The Scottish Government is keen to promote all forms of international engagement, particularly as we enter a period of uncertainty surrounding the UK's membership of the European Union and what our future relationship with Europe will be. This policy statement serves to reaffirm the Scottish Government's commitment to substantially engaging with the Nordic and Baltic region irrespective of the broader outcome.







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