Scotland Open Government Action Plan 2021-2025

Independent Monitoring Body: Interim Assessment

Introduction

This report provides a mid-term appraisal of the implementation of the five commitments in Scotland's third Open Government Action Plan (2021-2025). In order to ensure comparability with other Open Government Partnership (OGP) members around the world, the assessment draws on the Independent Reporting Mechanism's (IRM) methodology for assessing commitment completion.

The report offers an important learning opportunity a little over mid-way through Scotland's third Action Plan[1]. It presents findings on progress to date, remaining barriers to successful implementation, and recommendations for the remainder of the action plan period and beyond. It does not address the broader results or impact of the commitments at this stage.

The assessment was carried out by Andy McDevitt independent reporter, between April and May 2024, based on a review of documents, a mid-term stocktake workshop, and interviews with 15 representatives of the Scottish Government and civil society organisations involved in Scotland's OGP process[2].

The report is structured as follows.

1. **Key lessons** from the first two years of the action plan, with a focus on how the new 4-year action plan cycle and the iterative approach to action planning have affected implementation.
2. **Overarching recommendations** on how the open government process might be strengthened with a view to developing the next open government action plan in 2025.
3. **An overview of progress on commitment implementation**, including the main highlights, challenges, enabling factors and suggestions for the remainder of the action plan period.
4. **An annex** with a more detailed summary of commitment progress, including coding for each activity area.

---

[1] In most cases the information is accurate up to December 2023, although in those cases where more up-to-date information is provided, this is indicated

[2] 12 government representatives and 3 civil society representatives (a number of civil society representatives did not respond to requests for interview)

1. Key lessons to date

Experience to date suggests that the four-year action plan cycle has come with both pros and cons although stakeholders generally agreed that the benefits have outweighed the risks.

This is the first time that Scotland has implemented a four-year action plan. As such, the approach to developing commitments and milestones has been more iterative than for previous plans.

Among the challenges identified with regard to a longer action plan cycle were the fact that shifts in political priorities can be hard to foresee and that commitments risk losing momentum and focus. Adopting a 4-year cycle also runs the risk that plans are too ambitious and struggle to deliver. Some stakeholders, for example, noted that it was initially a challenge to get a handle on the appropriate scope of commitments while ensuring that milestones were concrete. Having a longer plan also runs the danger of closing out new opportunities. It is therefore important to think about what work can also be done on the fringes of the commitments, rather than being locked into a predetermined set of outcomes.

On the other hand, because the transaction costs of putting together an action plan can be significant (including getting ministerial sign-off), a longer timeframe allows for a more strategic and ambitious approach without having to start from scratch every two years. This is particularly important for longer-term pieces of work such as the fiscal transparency or health and social care agendas.

Stakeholders generally agreed that having the flexibility to adapt and iterate while maintaining a focus on high-level outcomes with regular check-ins to gauge progress and readjust has been crucial. In particular, iteration has enabled commitment teams to adapt to changing circumstances or seize emerging opportunities. For example, the development of a procurement framework for participation under commitment 5 (Participation) or the roll out of an AI register under commitment 3 (Data and Digital) have taken on greater significance than had originally been envisaged, while other activities have fallen off the agenda or been deprioritized. Iteration has also allowed commitments to incorporate real time learning (e.g. the learning from COVID around safeguarding and equity has been incorporated into the procurement framework under commitment 5.)

That said, the planning process has differed from one commitment to another. Of the five commitments, commitment 1 (Fiscal Transparency) has stuck most closely to a predetermined set of milestones. Having had more general commitments in the previous two action plans, the fiscal transparency agenda had matured to the extent that it was clearer what activities needed to be implemented at the outset of this action plan. As a new area for the action plan, commitment 2 (Health and Social Care) in contrast, was initially conceived in much broader terms, with a focus on building internal capacity, understanding the status quo, and identifying priorities. The commitment has since become more concrete, with a decision to focus efforts on co-design of the National Care Service (NCS) (which was only a high-level manifesto commitment at the time of writing the plan).

Resource constraints and uneven civil society engagement continue to be two of the most important barriers to advancing Scotland's open government agenda. On the other hand, those commitments which have secured senior buy-in have generally seen a higher degree of implementation. Nevertheless, demonstrating the value of OGP more generally continues to be a challenge, both within government and externally.

Many stakeholders once again raised the issue of resources as a key challenge to successful commitment implementation. This has been felt even more keenly than during previous action plans following the COVID-19 pandemic, with commitment teams having to rework deliverables in order to achieve the same objectives with fewer resources. This has been particularly true for commitment 5 (for example the plan to run annual citizen assemblies has been put on hold) and commitment 4 (which has been affected by resource constraints and turnover of staff). The issue of civil society resources to engage in the open government process also remains a perennial issue.

Civil society engagement, more generally, continues to be a central challenge to the OGP process in Scotland. As noted by several stakeholders, the fact that many of the deliverables remain largely internally focused means that commitments have struggled to make a compelling offer to civil society that aligns with their interests and existing priorities. As a result, it is difficult to get civil society on board. Yet without sustained civil society support, it is more difficult for government to engage externally. This has created somewhat of a vicious cycle. Finding creative ways to break this cycle will be important to progressing the open government agenda in Scotland moving forward. This dynamic is exacerbated by the fact that that the technical language of milestone and commitments can be off-putting to many CSOs (as well as government stakeholders) who may struggle to see the relevance and direct impact of OGP on citizen wellbeing. Day to day implementation can seem too detailed for civil society who are often focussed on the bigger picture. It is therefore important to be able to frame commitments in a more outward facing way without getting bogged down in the process. Equally important is to find ways to cross-pollinate with other civil society engagement processes outside of OGP.

Recognition of the value of open government continues to be a challenge across government. Open government is still often seen as an add-on to the day-to-day work of public officials, rather than a way of working. This is especially true in areas which are new to the action plan such as Health and Social Care or Climate Change but is also the case for other areas such as Fiscal Transparency. A specific challenge to commitment 5 is the limited recognition across the Scottish Government of the importance of ensuring the right skills are in place to deliver civic participation. While delivering commitments has been and will continue to be important, there may be a case for adopting a broader open government strategy to help embed open government principles across areas of government (see below).

The most successful commitments have been those which have managed to garner and maintain support from senior leadership. This is most notable in the case of commitment 1, which has received strong backing from the Director of Fiscal Sustainability and Exchequer Development, through the prioritization of resources and commitment of person time. Under commitment 3, there has been increasing recognition of the importance of ensuring buy-in from senior leadership to achieve culture change in the

way Scottish government data is produced and disseminated. This understanding sits at the heart of the Data Transformation Framework (DTF) which places a good deal of emphasis on understanding how decisions are made and on supporting public officials to act as data champions within their organizations.

Ministerial support for the broader open government agenda is equally important. The current ministerial lead (Minister for Parliamentary Business) is a strong champion of open government and his understanding of the value of open government has broadened over time. It remains to be seen whether this support continues with new leadership at the top of the Scottish Government and upcoming UK general elections on the horizon.

2. Overarching recommendations

Section 3 provides some suggestions on where teams might concentrate their efforts over the remainder of the action plan period for each commitment. Here we provide some more general recommendations on how the open government process might be strengthened with a view to developing the next open government action plan in 2025.

- **Consider investing in a period of reflection before the next action plan**: After 7 years of OGP in Scotland, the time is ripe to take stock of what has been achieved to date and whether the open government work is focusing on the right set of issues. This could also be an opportunity to define more of a narrative frame for the open government agenda in Scotland to better communicate the concrete contributions it has and could make to Scottish society more generally.
- **Consider developing an additional workstream in parallel to the current set of commitments in order to set up the co-design of the next action plan**: This work could focus in particular on better understanding the current barriers to civil society involvement in OGP, identifying potential areas of alignment between government and civil society interests, and considering what can be done to support a stronger civil society in Scotland.
- **Consider building the next plan around a broader open government strategy which focusses on fewer areas, but in more depth**: The idea of an open government strategy for Scotland has been brewing for a while. One approach may be to develop a smaller number of impactful actions around one or two themes (e.g. building participation and/or open data more purposefully into a small number of concrete thematic areas such as fiscal transparency or health and social care) and pooling resources from different departments to focus on embedding the open government approach in a more concentrated way. This might result in a bigger impact externally than having 5 commitments. Spreading responsibility for open government across a broader range of actors could also help institutionalise the open government process, rather than relying on the passion and dedication of a small number of individuals within a single team to drive it, as has been the case to date. The process of co-designing an open government strategy could itself be a useful exercise to help build momentum among different government and civil society stakeholders.
- **Consider how a future action plan might include more concrete roles for civil society partners in implementation beyond an oversight role**: To help demonstrate the true value of open government to civil society, commitment teams could consider how the next action plan might more explicitly involve non-government partners in the implementation of commitments or

activities themselves. Doing this in a manner which does not create the perception of favoritism may require some creative thinking. Nevertheless, the positive experience of the SHRC in leading on the benchmarking work under commitment 1 shows that it can be mutually beneficial (see commitment 1 below). In addition, providing greater support for engaging civil society, including more accessible information about the roles, process and commitment needed for civil society members to play and active role in OGP processes would be beneficial.

- **Consider introducing a more standardized approach to structuring commitments to support more streamlined monitoring for future action plans**: As noted above, each commitment has taken a slightly different approach to milestone development. While this flexibility has proven to be a strength of the third action plan, it has nevertheless led to a degree of confusion in the process of self-reporting. For example, different commitments have interpreted terms such as "actions" and "milestones" differently, while the coding used for internal progress reporting has been applied inconsistently across commitments. One approach may be to use commitment 1 as a model in terms of outcome-focused milestone development and planning, whilst at the same time adopting the standard OGP coding for commitment completion for self-reporting.

3. Overview of progress on commitment implementation: highlights, challenges and enabling factors

Commitment 1: Fiscal Transparency

1a. Commitment highlights

The centerpiece of the commitment, the Fiscal Transparency Portal, was presented in Beta form at the OGP Nordic+ Meeting in April 2024[3]. With that, an important milestone for this commitment has been met. The portal has largely been internal to date, and it remains to be seen whether the government will be in a position to launch a live service within the current plan[4].

As noted by several stakeholders, the key to success will be in the extent to which the portal is resourced, populated, and used. The latter will require an extra set of activities to engage different audiences at the appropriate time (this is envisaged in future milestones). In practice, it is likely that the portal will be used first by civil servants themselves, and gradually taken up by civil society[5].

Through this commitment the government also now publishes more information around the budget to enhance transparency (e.g. classification of spending by functions of government (COFOG) and enhanced guides to the Budget "Your Scotland, Your

---

[3] The Nordic+ is an informal OGP regional peer exchange caucus where government points of contact and civil society alike meet to cross-pollinate ideas, identify best open government practices, and share their experiences in implementing open government reforms.
[4] Interview with the Fiscal Transparency commitment team, Scottish Government, 8 May 2024
[5] Interview with Lucy McTernan, Civil Society Steering group member, 6 May 2024

Finances"). This is an ongoing area of work and the only one that didn't, at the time of interviewing, have milestones defined until the end of the plan[6].

The proposed benchmarking has seen limited progress due to resource issues[7]. Although the benchmarking work was intended to take place at the start of the action plan period in order to ensure the commitment was grounded in international standards, this did not happen in practice[8]. The progress that has been made has been driven largely by civil society though the leadership of the Scottish Human Rights Commission (SHRC) which has volunteered to rerun its assessment of the Scottish Budget using the Open Budget Survey (OBS) as a baseline. According to a representative of the SHRC, the government's recognition of the OBS as a baseline led the SHRC to recommit to the assessment[9]. This work was also presented at the Nordic+ Meeting in April 2024.

Public engagement on the Infrastructure Investment Plan (IIP) is the area which has seen the least progress. Stakeholders acknowledged that beyond drawing on existing working groups and panels, the government hasn't yet succeeded in shifting the dial on genuine CSO and citizen engagement[10]. This also applies to some extent to the engagement work around tax, although the establishment of a Tax Advisory Group is a positive development.

1b. Enablers and challenges

Stakeholders generally agreed that this commitment has seen the most progress and is also the most successful in terms of government-civil society collaboration. This success can be attributed to a range of factors including support from senior leadership, prioritization of resources, and commitment of person time[11]. It has benefitted from consistent focus on both government and civil society side, with the government-civil society commitment working group meeting quarterly as well as taking stock and developing milestones annually[12]. Civil society engagement is strong in part because the commitment connects well with existing civil society priorities (e.g. the SHRC's work on gender budgeting).[13]

The commitment has also benefitted from a willingness to learn from international best practice, including through the Nordic+ group[14]. The Nordic+ meeting in January 2024 has brought the fiscal transparency work in Scotland to a broader audience whilst capturing the attention of senior officials in Scotland[15]. The fact that fiscal transparency work has been included in the previous two action plans, has enabled the current commitment to build on previous work, including the Scottish Exchequer's Fiscal Transparency Discovery Report[16] delivered at the end of the previous action plan cycle.

On the other hand, given the focus of resources in government on the delivery of key fiscal events there remains the challenge that the open government process can still be

---

[6] Interview with the Fiscal Transparency commitment team, Scottish Government, 8 May 2024
[7] Interview with the Fiscal Transparency commitment team, Scottish Government, 8 May 2024
[8] Interview with Lucy McTernan, Civil Society Steering group member, 6 May 2024
[9] Alison Hosie, SHRC, IRM Strategy workshop, 26 March 2024
[10] Interview with Lucy McTernan, Civil Society Steering group member, 6 May 2024
[11] Interview with Lucy McTernan, Civil Society Steering group member, 6 May 2024; Interview with the Fiscal Transparency commitment team, Scottish Government, 8 May 2024
[12] Interview with the Fiscal Transparency commitment team, Scottish Government, 8 May 2024
[13] Interview with Lucy McTernan, Civil Society Steering group member, 6 May 2024
[14] Interview with Lucy McTernan, Civil Society Steering group member, 6 May 2024
[15] Interview with the Fiscal Transparency commitment team, Scottish Government, 8 May 2024
[16] https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-exchequer-fiscal-transparency-discovery-report/

seen as an "add-on". Bringing the fiscal transparency work into the Exchequer's broader budget improvement programme will be important to ensure it has more cohesion and becomes an integral, if small, part of the Exchequer's approach. Feeding the results of the SHRC's assessment of the Scottish Budget into government's own benchmarking (including the IMF Code work) should help provide an international perspective and gap analysis for longer term work (including the Exchequer's Strategic Plan)[17]. Incorporating the open government work into the overall Directorate plans and delivery programme more generally (rather than as a standalone piece of work) will be crucial to maintain longer term success[18].

A related concern is to ensure the connectedness of the fiscal transparency agenda through the work of parliament, independent oversight institutions and the government. The potential of the Fiscal Transparency Portal has gained the attention of parliamentarians on the Finance and Public Administration Committee and its Financial Scrutiny Unit, as well as officials in Audit Scotland and the Scottish Fiscal Commission. Within government, ministers, including the Deputy First Minister and Minister for Parliamentary Business, also see the potential of this work and are supportive of it. Maintaining this degree connectedness and political buy-in will be important to ensure the sustainability of the portal. This is also the ambition for the budget improvement work[19].

1c. Looking ahead

For the remainder of the action plan period, key priorities include developing a live version of the public facing fiscal portal (subject to resources), refining the internal benchmarking, rolling out the government's internal procurement data platform to more public bodies and identifying new sources of data, working with the Scottish Futures Trust to improve engagement around infrastructure, and engaging with citizens and stakeholders to better understand existing knowledge around tax[20].

The broader impact of the commitment will likely not be felt until the fiscal portal is launched, be that during this plan or the next. According to the commitment team, while the portal has political support, the timing of the launch will ultimately depend on resources. Crucially, it will also depend on the quality and breadth of the underlying data[21].

Once launched, the commitment team could also consider how government and civil society might collaborate in supporting public engagement on specific sectoral analysis through the portal (e.g. engaging civil society groups on tax and infrastructure data, exploring the health budget, or engaging youth groups in education).

In the longer term, the Exchequer might consider building on the initial engagement work under the current plan to develop a more ambitious and integrated approach to citizen participation and engagement, for example around the Medium-Term Financial Strategy or in relation to its budget improvement work, rather than (or in addition to)

---

[17] Interview with the Fiscal Transparency commitment team, Scottish Government, 8 May 2024
[18] Interview with the Fiscal Transparency commitment team, Scottish Government, 8 May 2024
[19] Interview with the Fiscal Transparency commitment team, Scottish Government, 8 May 2024
[20] Fiscal Transparency Commitment – Draft Forward Milestones – January 2024 (unpublished)
[21] Interview with the Fiscal Transparency commitment team, Scottish Government, 8 May 2024

specific themes such as infrastructure. Such an approach could potentially form part of a broader open government strategy for Scotland, as discussed above.

Commitment 2: Health and Social Care

2a. Commitment highlights

This commitment has made substantial progress in developing approaches to person-centred co-design in two areas: (i) the proposed National Care Service (NCS); and (ii) the government's Care and Wellbeing portfolio. Crucially, the commitment team has been able to link to existing stakeholder groups such as the Social Covenant Steering Group[22] (which works with people who have experience of accessing or delivering social care support) or pathfinders[23] (frontline practitioners) in order to support the development of these programmes and test their co-design approach[24]. Because of the broad range of organisations with a stake in the work, the government has set up a key stakeholder register (currently 120 organisations) to broaden the range of engagement, including in planning the co-design work itself[25].

Among the key successes to date are the development of tools, methods and guidance to demonstrate what good co-design looks like. The commitment team acknowledges, however, that simply developing guidance is not enough, and that long term success essentially requires "co-designing the approach to co-design" [26]. Working on a specific co-design programme such as the NCS allows people to understand what co-design principles mean in practice rather than in the abstract. The commitment team is also producing reports that show the concrete impact of the co-design work (e.g. how the outcomes have informed the NCS Bill), to shed light on how government decisions are made[27].

One of the commitment's biggest assets is access to lived experience through the GIRFE Pathfinders Project. Under GIRFE, place-based frontline practitioners (so-called "pathfinders") engage people with lived experience on a specific health and social care related policy area. According to the commitment team, the pathfinders have expressed the fact that see value in the process and want to contribute. Pathfinder teams have also become better at challenging their government counterparts as they gain more experience[28].

There has been less progress in efforts to engage the civil society group through the stages of the action plan's implementation. The original group of stakeholder organisations working on health and social care supported the development of milestones but had limited capacity in supporting implementation of a full programme of work. While the commitment has been successful at hooking into where civil society work is already being done, this is through the co-design work itself rather than through the OGP process. The commitment team has recently begun to engage more with the Health and Social Care (HSC) third sector collaborative, which has become the de facto

---

[22] https://www.gov.scot/groups/social-covenant-steering-group/
[23] https://www.gov.scot/publications/getting-it-right-for-everyone-girfe/
[24] Interview with the Health and Social Care commitment team, Scottish Government, 7 May 2024
[25] Interview with the Health and Social Care commitment team, Scottish Government, 7 May 2024
[26] Interview with the Health and Social Care commitment team, Scottish Government, 7 May 2024
[27] Interview with the Health and Social Care commitment team, Scottish Government, 7 May 2024
[28] Interview with the Health and Social Care commitment team, Scottish Government, 7 May 2024

civil society side of the commitment working group[29]. Nevertheless, the commitment team acknowledged that the two streams still feel somewhat disconnected and expressed a desire to strengthen engagement with the HSC third sector collaborative though specific asks, e.g. around learning what works, as well as in developing the next set of milestones[30].

2b. Enablers and challenges

One of the greatest challenges to the objective of meaningful co-design is that of driving culture change. In particular, the culture of measuring outcomes can be a key barrier to successful co-design, which is a long-term and often messy process. Co-design requires all involved to take off their "representative hats" and move into a more collaborative space. Achieving this requires more honesty about the realities, limitations, and challenges of co-design in order to build trust among those involved[31]. At the same time, the commitment team acknowledged that it has taken time for many to see the relevance of OGP to the health and social care agenda, although this is slowly changing[32].

The current political climate has also proved challenging, with an increasing tendency towards populism, polarisation and simple solutions, which is antithetical to meaningful co-design. Meanwhile, because the legislative process runs at a different pace to co-design processes, it can be difficult to marry the two, although the commitment team considered that fact that co-design is now baked into the proposed NCS Bill is a promising development in this regard[33].

2c. Looking ahead

For the remainder of the action plan, the focus of this commitment will be on the further development of the National Care Service. Important milestones include the passing of the NCS Bill and the establishment of a national board. The commitment team could consider how open government approaches might practically be embedded into these processes through stakeholder engagement and develop milestones to that effect.

In terms of co-design, the remaining sessions for the NCS, analysis and communication of insights will continue into 2024, with feedback and learning from the sessions incorporated into future work.[34] The next steps for the GIRFE Pathfinders project include finalising the analysis of ideas and concepts developed through the co-design process and engagement planning for the next phase including training and coaching support.[35]

It will be important to consider over the next 18 months how to more purposefully involve the Health and Social Care (HSC) third sector collaborative in the implementation of the commitment as well as in the design of any future commitment in this area. As noted by the commitment team, one area in which collaboration could be fruitful is around sense-

---

[29] Interview with Lucy McTernan, Civil Society Steering group member, 6 May 2024

[30] Interview with the Health and Social Care commitment team, Scottish Government, 7 May 2024

[31] Interview with the Health and Social Care commitment team, Scottish Government, 7 May 2024

[32] Interview with the Health and Social Care commitment team, Scottish Government, 7 May 2024

[33] Interview with the Health and Social Care commitment team, Scottish Government, 7 May 2024

[34] https://www.gov.scot/publications/open-government-action-plan-2021-to-2025-commitment-2-health-and-social-care/pages/progress-to-december-2023/

[35] https://www.gov.scot/publications/open-government-action-plan-2021-to-2025-commitment-2-health-and-social-care/pages/progress-to-december-2023/

making of the learning and materials from the co-design content inventory which the team has collected to date[36].

Looking further ahead, the next big challenge will be to understand what the Scottish Approach to Service Design (which is now well embedded) means not just from a service perspective but also from a policy-making and legislative point of view. Future work in this area might therefore consider how to draw on the learning to date in order to embed open government approaches in policy and legislative design in the health and care sector.

Commitment 3: Digital and Data

3a. Commitment highlights

According to the digital and data team, the greatest potential for culture change in the way public sector organisations use of data is likely to come from the implementation of recommendations developed by Fractals and Open Data Services on a more strategic approach to open data. The recommendations call for moving beyond the provision of technical guidance towards "a clear vision for purpose driven open data that is longer term and collaborative, supported by clear standards and guidance to support data producers"[37].

More immediately, the ongoing delivery of the Data Maturity and Pathways Programme (DMPP) and first iteration of the Data Transformation Framework (DTF) are providing practical tools to help public sector organisations develop a more holistic approach to data production. A key component of the DTF is the emphasis on ensuring buy-in from senior leadership, which is crucial to achieving culture change. To this end, the commitment team is developing a self-serve product for managers and leaders as a complement to the DMPP to help encourage them to commit the necessary investment in data maturity[38].

Another success has been the development of a new online search tool www.Find.Data.Gov.Scot which helps data users find relevant public sector datasets and helps data providers enhance dataset discoverability and better understand user needs. The tool brings together existing data and metadata across the different public sector organisations and adds schema.org metadata to make it discoverable through search engines such as Google.

There has been incremental, but more limited, progress with efforts to improve the front end of the government's official statistics portal (www.statistics.gov.scot). The commitment team is aware that the site is not being used in the way intended and that it is not easy for people to find and use the data, leading to a high drop-out rate. It is also not user friendly for data providers. User research sessions to identify key problems are currently internal but the team is planning to go external in future. The government has acknowledged that this is a long-term agile project, which will likely continue beyond the current action plan[39].

---

[36] Interview with the Health and Social Care commitment team, Scottish Government, 7 May 2024
[37] Interview with the Data and Digital commitment team, Scottish Government, 30 April 2024
[38] Interview with the Data and Digital commitment team, Scottish Government, 30 April 2024
[39] Interview with the Data and Digital commitment team, Scottish Government, 30 April 2024

As an enabling commitment, one of its objectives is to support the opening up of data relevant to different open government themes. While there has been limited work to progress this area of work in relation to the other commitments in this plan (fiscal transparency, health and social care, and climate change), in practice this is happening more in other areas such as transport, including through the Community of Practice (CoP) for Data Standards and Open Data. As noted by the commitment team, this is ultimately the core of their day-to-day work, although it is difficult to track[40].

Two of the original milestones have fallen off the agenda since the action plan was developed: the Data Intelligence Network no longer exists while there has been little engagement with COSLA on opportunities at the local level since the action plan was signed off[41].

3b. Enablers and challenges

Much like commitment 1, this commitment has benefitted from the fact that it continues work carried out under previous action plans. As a result, the commitment team has developed a stronger understanding of the challenges associated with data provision and use as they relate to the external environment (leadership, commitment, purpose etc.). Because the Scottish Government does not own most of the data, a key emphasis has to be on persuading others to publish data, which requires a collaborative approach and an understanding of the varied and complex challenges facing public sector organisations, which determine how decisions are made. This in turn requires greater emphasis on providing guidance and support to public sector data providers to influence their own bosses on the value of data literacy. The Community of Practice (CoP) and the various working groups within it (e.g. the influencing group) are proving to be a useful forum for addressing these issues.

On the other hand, the commitment remains largely internally facing. Collaboration with civil society has been limited to interaction with the civil society representative for the commitment on the development of the initial milestones. That said, there has been interaction with external stakeholders through other channels such as the Find.Data.Gov.Scot advisory group, made up of public and private sector organisations alongside Open Data Scotland. The CoP is also an engagement forum, although this is currently focused on public sector organisations, rather than external stakeholders[42]. The data team has promoted the value and impact of open data and its role in open government at several CoP and wider sessions during the year. Meanwhile, each of the public sector members of the CoP has its own mechanisms for engaging with relevant users.[43]

3c. Looking ahead

Plans for the remainder of the action plan include continuing to add data sources to https://find.data.gov.scot/ and developing API integration capability, conducting user testing of www.statistics.gov.scot, continuing to grow involvement in the CoP to facilitate shared learning, developing a self-guided data maturity planning product, and considering how to implement the recommendations from the open data report.

---

[40] Interview with the Data and Digital commitment team, Scottish Government, 30 April 2024
[41] Interview with the Data and Digital commitment team, Scottish Government, 30 April 2024
[42] Interview with the Data and Digital commitment team, Scottish Government, 30 April 2024
[43] Email communication with the Data and Digital team, 6 June 2024

As noted by the commitment team, much of this work will be a continuation of existing activities, but some will involve a step change. In particular, the recent announcement from Ministers that the government will mandate use of the AI register within the public sector means that what started out as a somewhat experimental project has turned into a large-scale endeavor which will require a whole new phase of planning[44]. In addition to advancing its ongoing work, the commitment team could consider prioritising work to engage external data users and consider how it can build both the demand and capacity among civil society groups and the broader public to use the data through specific use cases. Collaboration with the Exchequer on the fiscal transparency data portal (see commitment 1) could provide a good opportunity to test the approach. In the longer term, a greater focus on external engagement will be important to build resilience and sustainability for the future and ensure the commitment achieves its full potential. The data team noted it has plans to engage a thematic reference group in order to help advance this goal[45].

The data team also noted that work has begun to develop a new Digital Strategy and a new vision for public sector data in Scotland. At the same time, there is an emerging tension in the area of data between a desire to charge for government data on the one hand, and ensuring freely available open data, on the other. Both of these factors could impact the direction of the commitment in the longer term.

Commitment 4: Climate Change

4a. Commitment highlights

This commitment centres around the Climate Policy Engagement Network (CPEN), which was successfully launched in January 2023. The stated purpose of the network is to enable Scottish Government policy teams to invite network members to advise on engagement plans across DG Net Zero. Importantly, the network aims to deliver engagement on shaping existing policy commitments, rather than developing new climate policies independently of existing climate policy processes [46]. The first biannual members network meeting was held in February 2024. The network currently has around 130 members[47].

As noted by the commitment team, the network is currently still in an experimental phase. Members have expressed a desire to use the network as a means of hearing from each other, connecting up their work, and avoiding duplication, but aside from discussions during meetings and commenting on posts, there has been little proactive intra-membership engagement from network members to date. The network has proved useful for feeding into existing consultations, such as the open consultation process the Scottish National Adaptation Plan (SNAP 3). The commitment team acknowledged that the purpose, potential usage and value to Government of the network is still not clear to members. This is due to the relative novelty of CPEN and reflects the testing phase the network is currently in.. While the scope of the network has broadened to include not only engagement on sectoral Just Transition Plans (JTPs) and the new Climate Change

[44] Interview with the Data and Digital commitment team, Scottish Government, 30 April 2024
[45] Email communication with the Data and Digital team, 6 June 2024
[46] Scottish Government Open Government Partnership Network for Climate Policy Terms of Reference - February 2024 (unpublished)
[47] Interview with the Climate Change commitment team, Scottish Government, 21 May 2024

Plan (CCP) (currently delayed), but also on broader DG Net Zero Climate Policy, a clear approach to CPEN engagement in further specific policy areas is yet to be developed.[48]

4b. Enablers and challenges

Implementation of this commitment has suffered from a number of internal and external constraints. Internally, the commitment has changed course due to resource constraints and turnover in staff.[49]. Recent developments, including the delay to the new Climate Change Plan, have also affected the implementation of CPEN[50].

A second challenge is the engagement of both internal and external stakeholders in the network. Internally, the challenge is to publicise the network and work it into the engagement plans of different government policy areas (JTPs and other areas). Externally, the commitment team has little influence over how much network members invest in the network as they are self-motivated and self-funded, although members are selected based on their expertise and capacity.[51]

Civil society engagement in the commitment has been minimal to date, although there are some specialized civil society groups involved as members of the network and the commitment team interacts with civil society groups more broadly beyond CPEN through other engagement processes, which it has used as an opportunity to raise awareness of CPEN. The commitment team noted that they are currently exploring options to engage a new set of civil society stakeholders including the civil society chair of the open government steering group and a representative of Nourish Scotland, in order to help steer how the network is used.[52]

4c. Looking ahead

Key priorities for the remainder of the action plan include expanding the remit of the network across DG Net Zero into different policy areas beyond JTPs and the CCP. The commitment team will also focus on internal promotion of CPEN (with both traditional and non-traditional climate areas) and continue to experiment in terms of different forms of meetings, publications, and an increased role for civil society colleagues. The commitment team also noted the potential to bring in policy officials from government to present to CPEN, thus offering the opportunity for more direct interaction with those responsible for developing policy.[53]

Importantly, the commitment would benefit from a stronger role from civil society in helping to steer the direction of the network, as a core element of the open government process. Whilst acknowledging the need to manage expectations with regard to the level of engagement that can realistically be expected, collaboration with one of more civil society partners with the required expertise and broader networks could help give extra

---

[48] Interview with the Climate Change commitment team, Scottish Government, 21 May 2024
[49] Interview with Juliet Swann, civil society co-chair of the Open Government Steering Group, 6 May 2024; Interview with Alex Stobart, MyDex CIC, 30 April 2024
[50] In March 2024, the UK Climate Change Committee stated that "(c)ontinued delays to the updated climate change plan and further slippage in promised climate policies mean that the Climate Change Committee no longer believes that the Scottish Government will meet its statutory 2030 goal to reduce emissions by 75%. There is no comprehensive strategy for Scotland to decarbonise towards Net Zero. [...] The Scottish Government delayed its draft Climate Change Plan last year despite the 2030 target only being six years away. This has left a significant period without sufficient actions or policies to reach the target; the required acceleration in emissions reduction in Scotland is now beyond what is credible." See: https://www.theccc.org.uk/2024/03/20/scotlands-2030-climate-goals-are-no-longer-credible/
[51] Interview with the Climate Change commitment team, Scottish Government, 21 May 2024
[52] Interview with the Climate Change commitment team, Scottish Government, 21 May 2024
[53] Interview with the Climate Change commitment team, Scottish Government, 21 May 2024

impetus to the network and open it up to a wider set of stakeholders. Drawing on the experience of other commitments in engaging with civil society (in particular commitment 1) could be a useful point of departure.

Commitment 5: Participation

5a. Commitment highlights

This commitment has seen mixed results to date with certain areas progressing more than others. As an enabling commitment, a key focus has been on building the internal framework and capacity within government to commission and deliver effective participation. In this regard, an important achievement has been the development of a procurement framework for participation. Despite not originally being seen as core element of the commitment, stakeholders agreed that it has taken on greater significance as it has progressed, especially in light of the limited progress on implementation of the IPDD report recommendations (see below). The procurement framework will help broaden the scope of participation and mean that government will be required to meet certain standards in terms of inclusion, safeguarding and equalities when procuring participation exercises. It will also provide a mechanism to better co-ordinate participation work taking place across government, minimizing duplication and facilitating sharing of information. This should in turn address criticisms made by stakeholders of government participation work.[54] Another step has been the development of guidance for the payment of participant expenses and compensation for time in participation events, which is a small but pragmatic contribution to supporting broader engagement. This has resolved a known problem with equality and inclusion. It has been welcomed within and outside of government for raising standards, and for opening a discussion on the need for change in approach to research payments being made to individuals claiming social security, in order to support ethical practice. An initial training session has been delivered by civil society partners to social researchers on the fundamentals of participatory approaches – this will be followed by focused sessions on topics like ethics and specific methods in participatory work. There has also been some work to test new approaches to participation in different areas, such as the review of the National Performance Framework (NPF) or Community Empowerment Act. [55] However, the extent to which these review processes have embraced open government principles and approaches as intended (beyond applying existing consultation measures) is unclear, in part because the objective is itself hard to quantify.

There has been more limited progress with the two central elements of the commitment, namely the Participation Handbook (previously the Participation Framework) and implementation of the Institutionalizing Participation and Deliberative Democracy (IPDD) working group recommendations. While there has been a good deal of progress in internal testing and refining of the Participation Handbook, according to the civil society chair of the OG Steering group, the handbook remains too unwieldy to be effective.[56]

[54] Interview with the open government team, Scottish Government, 8 May 2024; Interview with Juliet Swann, civil society co-chair of the Open Government Steering Group, 6 May 2024
[55] Interview with the open government team, Scottish Government, 8 May 2024; Interview with Juliet Swann, civil society co-chair of the Open Government Steering Group, 6 May 2024
[56] Interview with Juliet Swann, civil society co-chair of the Open Government Steering Group, 6 May 2024

Furthermore, the commitment team acknowledged that the planned training on the handbook is not yet in place.[57]

More significantly, there has been limited progress on taking forward the recommendations of the IPDD report on which so much of the subsequent work relied. This has had a cascading effect on many of the other milestones as the IPDD recommendations would have provided a solid foundation and political backing to support the implementation of a range of participatory processes envisaged in the commitment.[58] According to the civil society chair of the OG steering group, while the IPDD report is a good "line in the sand", the government response to the recommendations was disappointing largely because the proposals were ambitious but there was limited budget to implement them. The fact that the report was developed by practitioners from the sector, rather than as a collaborative effort with government, meant it lacked a degree of pragmatism.[59]

Other elements of the commitment, such as the review of consultations, monitoring of the delivery of 1% of local authority budgets through participatory budgeting, or implementation of the National Participatory Budgeting Strategic Group's framework for the future of participatory budgeting have progressed largely independently of the open government process. Support to the delivery of annual Citizens' Assemblies and work to establish a centre of expertise on participation have stalled, in large part due to resource constraints. In the absence of sustained civil society engagement (see below), there has been limited progress on establishing an Open Government Network for Participation.

5b. Enablers and challenges

This commitment is considerably wider in scope than other commitments, with a broad range of activities envisaged under the banner of participation. On the one hand, this expansiveness enables its numerous tendrils to reach different parts of government.[60] On the other hand, tracking the contribution of the different elements to the overall objective of the commitment is a challenge and it has been difficult to identify concrete results.

A perennial challenge to this commitment is the lack of recognition across the Scottish Government of the importance of ensuring the right skills are in place to deliver participation. While all parts of government engage in some form of citizen participation, it continues to lack the required status as a discipline and is often delivered as a tick box exercise. Efforts to encourage more investment in participation work often meet resistance as public officials may consider that they are already delivering on their obligations to engage with the public. The limited progress on implementing the IPDD report recommendations limits the open government team's authority to push for higher standards in participation work across government.[61]

While the commitment has good representation from civil society, the small pool of civil society participation experts in Scotland necessarily has limited capacity to engage. At the same time, the fact that the deliverables remain largely internally focused means that the commitment has struggled to make a compelling offer to civil society that aligns

---

[57] Interview with the open government team, Scottish Government, 8 May 2024
[58] Interview with the open government team, Scottish Government, 8 May 2024
[59] Interview with Juliet Swann, civil society co-chair of the Open Government Steering Group, 6 May 2024
[60] Interview with Juliet Swann, civil society co-chair of the Open Government Steering Group, 6 May 2024
[61] Interview with the open government team, Scottish Government, 8 May 2024

with their interests and existing priorities. As a result, the commitment lacks civil society points of contact for each set of activities, which would enable more sense making across the commitment.[62]

5c. Looking ahead

Among the key activities envisaged for the remainder of the action plan are the ongoing review of the Participation Handbook and training content, with a focus on equalities and inclusion guidance, launching the training for government officials and the focused follow up training for social researchers, developing an approach to evaluating the impact of participation on policy-making, and issuing an Invitation To Tender (ITT) for the procurement framework.[63] Given that the procurement framework is likely to be a key vehicle for change going forward, early engagement with both internal and external stakeholders will be critical to ensure buy-in and take-up.

At the same time, given the challenges identified with civil society engagement on this commitment and across the action plan more broadly, additional work should be considered to better understand the current barriers to civil society involvement in OGP and to scope the range of existing participatory practice to ensure better alignment between government and civil society interests in this area. This also applies to the further refinement of the Participation Handbook, if the ambition is to make this available for use by civil society stakeholders.[64] This stream of work would also prove valuable for early planning of civil society engagement on the development of the next action plan.

Looking further ahead, the team could consider how to adopt a more strategic approach to its participation work as part of a broader open government strategy under the next action plan. This could include, for example, prioritizing those areas where open government principles can most effectively be taken on by other parts of government (e.g. Fiscal Transparency) and applying the Participation Handbook and training to those priority areas under a collaborative project with other government departments.

---

[62] Interview with the open government team, Scottish Government, 8 May 2024; Interview with Juliet Swann, civil society co-chair of the Open Government Steering Group, 6 May 2024

[63] Annual review of participation commitment milestones | Open Government Action Plan 2021 to 2025 (unpublished)

[64] Interview with Juliet Swann, civil society co-chair of the Open Government Steering Group, 6 May 2024

Annex: Detailed summary of commitment progress to date

The following section provides a more detailed summary of progress on commitment implementation, although it does not provide a comprehensive milestone by milestone appraisal of progress.

The Scottish government developed its own scale and taxonomy for reporting progress through its open government pages. However due to the fact that this has not been consistently applied and in order to ensure comparability with peer OGP members, this report adopts the standard OGP reporting scale for commitment progress. It should be noted that the progress reported reflects the current status of commitments implementation rather than the final status, which will be assessed in late 2025.

It should also be noted that the headings ("Actions/objectives", "Key milestones/ activities") have been standardised for the purposes of this report as each commitment is structured slightly differently and terms are interpreted differently across commitments. The contents of each commitment/milestone have also been summarised in the table below order to help with readability.

Commitment 1: Fiscal Transparency

Actions/ objectives	Key milestones/activities 2022-2023	Overall status	Summary of progress to date
Establish an approach to assess progress of fiscal openness and transparency, moving towards international best practices of transparency and data standards	• Review international best practice and undertake benchmarking against the IMF Fiscal Transparency Code and Open Budget Index	Limited Progress	The government conducted some internal outline benchmarking using the International Monetary Fund's Fiscal Transparency Code but did not undertake a review of international best practice[65]. The Scottish Human Rights Commission (SHRC) has led an assessment of Scotland's 2021-22 budget in line with the International Budget Partnership's (IBP) Global Open Budget Survey (OBS) 2023. The SHRC is due to report on the results as part of the Global Report launch in May 2024.
Implement the Fiscal Transparency Discovery Report recommendations to improve the quality, coverage, presentation and standards of	• Establish a Fiscal Transparency Programme • Deliver a fully functional minimum viable product (Fiscal transparency Portal) for the structuring, standardising and visualising of infrastructure investment data (Beta)	Completed/ on schedule	The government established a Fiscal Transparency Programme, with a programme team and Stakeholder Steering Group in 2022 and delivered a prototype Fiscal Transparency Portal in February 2023 with a number of working demonstrations provided[66]. A Minimum Viable Product (MVP) was launched in early 2024 and presented to

---

[65] https://www.gov.scot/publications/open-government-action-plan-2021-to-2025-commitment-1-fiscal-openness-and-transparency/pages/progress-to-october-2023/
[66] https://www.gov.scot/publications/open-government-action-plan-2021-to-2025-commitment-1-fiscal-openness-and-transparency/pages/progress-to-october-2023/

current fiscal data			stakeholders at an Event with OGP Nordic+ members in April 2024[67].
Deliver a procurement management information platform to improve data standards and demonstrate the impact of public sector procurement	• Undertake user testing of a Proof of Concept Alpha Management Information Platform • Deliver enhancements to the key procurement reporting and analytical capability • Review the communication and dissemination of existing procurement data and information	Substantial Progress	The government delivered the Management Information Platform Scotland (MIPS) through a Proof of Concept phase in late 2023[68]. The fiscal transparency team has proposed to develop a publicly accessible SME data portal as part of the MIPS has but is unlikely to be accepted[69].
Improve the transparency around the Scottish Budget, reviewing the accessibility and usability of existing and future information and guidance	• Involve a range of stakeholders through ongoing work on budget improvement • Review the accessibility and usability of information and guidance produced for the 2022-23 Autumn Budget Revision and 'Your Scotland, Your Finances' publication. • identify options for improvement for 2024-25 budget and future public finance publications • Review the style of information note produced for in-year budget revisions – to be undertaken as part of the Autumn Budget Revision.	Substantial progress	The government reviewed the 'Your Scotland; Your Finances' (YSYF) publication and produced a new web page publication alternative to improve accessibility, which is now mainstreamed within the Budget process. The government also made improvements to the guide that accompanies the in-year budget revision supporting document, which have received positive comments from the Scottish Parliament's Finance and Public Administration Committee (FPAC). A High-level summary of equalities and fairness evidence was published alongside the Emergency Budget Review (EBR) in November 2022. The government published an internal budget improvement paper and published the 2023-24 Budget information based on OECD's classification of the functions of government. However, stakeholder involvement in budget improvement work has not yet been undertaken[70].
Build on previous engagement and best practice to develop a multi-	• Review approach to public engagement on the Infrastructure Investment Plan (IIP).	Limited progress	The government established the Planning, Infrastructure and Place Advisory Group (PIPAG) in June 2023 with a view to

[67] Interview with the Fiscal Transparency commitment team, Scottish Government, 8 May 2024

[68] https://www.gov.scot/publications/open-government-action-plan-2021-to-2025-commitment-1-fiscal-openness-and-transparency/pages/progress-to-october-2023/

[69] https://www.gov.scot/publications/open-government-action-plan-2021-to-2025-commitment-1-fiscal-openness-and-transparency/pages/progress-to-october-2023/

[70] Open Government Action Plan 2021- 2025: Updated milestones (2023) [draft document, as yet unpublished]

stakeholder approach to the next Infrastructure Investment Plan.	• Establish an external stakeholder advisory group to advise on the linkages between planning, infrastructure and place (conditional on adoption of National Planning Framework 4)		providing strategic input to the development of the next IIP. However, the planned publication date of the next IIP has been moved back by a year to 2026-27, pushing the formal consultation period beyond the period of the current open government plan. The government is considering more informal consultation and multi-stakeholder engagement to develop thinking on the plan, including around needs assessment, but this has not yet progressed[71].
Build on previous engagement, striving for a best practice approach to engagement, ensuring that we use our tax powers in a transparent policy making process	• Publish a Framework for Tax, informed by wide ranging engagement • Develop an animated video campaign to explain Scotland's devolved tax powers • Publish an evaluation of 2018-19 Scottish Income Tax policy and carry out engagement activity • Explore with civil society opportunities for tax engagement to go broader and explore new topics. • Engage with a different set of varied stakeholders to understand how tax communication and engagement with the public can be strengthened.	Substantial progress	Scotland's first Framework for Tax was published in December 2021. The government published the findings of the Scottish Income Tax 2018-19 policy evaluation alongside the Chartered Institute of Tax and the Institute for Fiscal Studies as well as an animated video 'Raised in Scotland. Spent in Scotland.' A Tax Advisory Group (TAG), was established as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy in July 2023 to discuss the tax system as a whole and identify opportunities for broader public engagement[72]. However, work to explore broader opportunities for tax engagement with civil society stakeholders has not progressed[73].

Commitment 2: Health and Social Care

Actions/ objectives	Key milestones/activities 2022-2023	Overall status	Summary of progress to date
Identify the necessary skills and experience required by a person centred	• Hire and on-board a person-centred design team • Develop the programme plan to ensure that the	Completed/ on schedule	All posts for the design team were recruited[74]. The first year of the action plan focused on understanding the status quo, building capacity within the Health

---

[71] Open Government Action Plan 2021- 2025: Updated milestones (2023) [draft document, as yet unpublished]
[72] https://www.gov.scot/publications/open-government-action-plan-2021-to-2025-commitment-1-fiscal-openness-and-transparency/pages/progress-to-october-2023/
[73] Open Government Action Plan 2021- 2025: Updated milestones (2023) [draft document, as yet unpublished]
[74] https://www.gov.scot/publications/open-government-action-plan-2021-to-2025-commitment-2-health-and-social-care/pages/progress-to-august-2022/

design team to drive forward our action plan.	person-centred user design work is built into the programme management structure		and Social Care team and developing a programme of work, with a decision to develop approaches to person-centred co-design in two areas: the National Care Service (NCS) and Care and Wellbeing portfolio[75].
Invite civil society to work with us through the stages of the action plan's implementation	• Establish a civil society group to work with Scottish Government to review work that is undertaken and feedback on progress • Continue to develop the remit and role of the civil society group to play an active and ongoing role as a critical friend • Review relevant good practice that has already been undertaken on this subject to learn lessons	Limited Progress	Limited progress had been made by the end of 2023 in agreeing the remit and role of the civil society group[76]. The initial civil society group supported the development of milestones but had limited capacity in supporting the development and implementation of a full programme of work[77]. In early 2024 it was agreed that the Third Sector Health and Social Care Collaborative would take on the civil society group role going forward[78].
Develop a programme of work that systematically embeds good practice and the principles of co-design across the re-design of services and work in health and social care	• Develop and deliver a first iteration of the 'design school' model in key health and social care areas, such as: (i) the National Care Service (NCS) programme; and (ii) the Getting It Right For Everyone (GIRFE) Pathfinder Project	Substantial Progress	The Scottish Government is delivering design school support to the NCS programme and the GIRFE Pathfinder Project. NCS co-design sessions started in October 2023. On 30 October, the National Care Service National Forum took place online and in-person at the Glasgow Science Centre with more than 250 participants. In October 2023, the eight Health and Social Care Partnership pathfinder teams submitted ideas and concepts developed with service users and staff. An in-person event was held in Dundee on 15 November and followed by virtual sessions. Work to analyse the results is ongoing[79].
Draw out learnings both in health and social care and across wider Scottish Government to ensure future work can be	• Test and embed good practice in a local or small-scale environment and review and apply changes to our work as it progresses based on learning and feedback • Support the newly established Lived Experience Expert Panel	Substantial progress	The Lived Experience Experts Panel (LEEP) and Stakeholder Register opened for applications in September 2022 and 12 welcome sessions were held in November and December 2022. NCS regional forum events through summer 2023 were promoted specifically to members of LEEP. In November 2023, people with experience in

---

[75] Interview with the Health and Social Care commitment team, Scottish Government, 7 May 2024

[76] https://www.gov.scot/publications/open-government-action-plan-2021-to-2025-commitment-2-health-and-social-care/pages/progress-to-october-2023/

[77] Interview with the Health and Social Care commitment team, Scottish Government, 7 May 2024

[78] Interview with the Health and Social Care commitment team, Scottish Government, 7 May 2024

[79] https://www.gov.scot/publications/open-government-action-plan-2021-to-2025-commitment-2-health-and-social-care/pages/progress-to-december-2023/

| progressed more widely | (LEEP) and Stakeholder Register to meaningfully participate in decision-making within health and social care
• Develop and agree an approach to assessing impact and learning from co-design activities across health and social care. | | social care within LEEP joined co-design sessions for the 'Valuing the Workforce' theme[80]. A monthly newsletter goes out to all members of LEEP with updates about the programme, information on what has taken place and new opportunities to take part in co-design. A co-design maturity matrix is being developed, covering key criteria such as capacity and capability for co-design, senior sponsorship, and implementation of design decisions[81]. |

Commitment 3: Data and Digital

Actions/ objectives	Key milestones/activities 2022-2023	Current status	Summary of progress to date
Open up data relevant to different open government themes	• Identify and open up data relevant to open government themes, such as key climate change datasets used by government for modelling and reporting, data on public transport and public sector expenditure.	Limited progress	The data standards lead has provided some technical support to the Fiscal Transparency commitment in the development of the Fiscal Transparency Portal. The data team has also produced a business case for climate change data and has inputted to the Health and Social Care open data strategy[82]. However, progress in term of opening specific data sets remains limited to date.
Run a CivTech challenge	• Run a CivTech challenge to evaluate if technology can make public sector data easy to find, assess outcomes and set out the way forward.	Completed/ On schedule	The government launched Find.Data.Gov.Scot the new data discovery search engine developed as part of a CivTech challenge in November 2023. Almost 19,000 datasets from more than 700 data owners were accessible as of the end of 2023 and new data sources are being continually added[83].
Set up the Data Transformation Framework (DTF)	• Pilot Data Maturity Pathways project which will guide six public sector organisations through an end to end journey which defines their objectives for data and builds better understanding of the	Substantial progress	Three cohorts of the Data Maturity and Pathways Programme (DMPP) have been completed, with a fourth underway, and the first iteration of a minimum viable product (MVP) of a modular, self-supporting approach to data maturity planning (the Data Transformation Framework) has

---

[80] https://www.gov.scot/publications/open-government-action-plan-2021-to-2025-commitment-2-health-and-social-care/pages/progress-to-december-2023/

[81] https://www.gov.scot/publications/open-government-action-plan-2021-to-2025-commitment-2-health-and-socialcare/pages/progress-to-december-2023/

[82] Interview with the Data and Digital commitment team, Scottish Government, 30 April 2024

[83] Interview with the Data and Digital commitment team, Scottish Government, 30 April 2024

	components required for maturity • Set up the Data Transformation Framework stating what 'good data' looks like and the process by which organisations can improve data maturity, data literacy and adoption of standards, through collaboration and engagement.		been delivered[84]. 33 organisations and over half of Scottish Local Authorities have signed up to the Programme[85]. The framework encompasses an in-depth set of resources (workshops, expert advice, reusable tools and resources) to help civil servants effect culture change in their organisations[86]. The Data Division has also held an initial discussion about the potential hosting for wider use by the Scottish Digital Academy (SDA)[87].
Review the front end of our official statistics open data publishing platform	• Conduct user research to inform user journeys on our official statistics open data publishing platform www.statistics.gov.scot and agree next steps on improvements • Agree and establish communications channels and understand user needs. • Review the front end of www.statistics.gov.scot	Limited Progress	The Data Division is developing a roadmap to scope further improvements to the technical capabilities and front-end of the government's official statistics open data publishing platform, to better meet needs of data products and consumers. The team has conducted internal user testing, made incremental technical changes such as scoping out where language on the platform could be changed and recruited an Open Data Technical Lead in October 2023[88].
Increase the amount of Scottish public sector open data being published	• Increase the amount of Scottish public sector open data being published, through collaborations such as the Data Standards and Open Data Community of Practice.	Substantial progress	The government has established a Community of Practice (CoP) for Data Standards and Open Data which aims at increasing the adoption of data standards and the publication of more open data within Scotland's public sector, with over 100 members. The first CoP conference took place online in November 2023, while the Scottish Government also participated in several external events (Data Summit, Open Data Unconference, Data Science Accelerator Programme Event, Data Standards) to raise awareness of the enabling role played by data [89]. The Open Data Services Co-operative and Fractals Co-op delivered high-level research findings and recommendations on the government's foundational

---

[84] https://www.gov.scot/publications/open-government-action-plan-2021-to-2025-commitment-3-data-and-digital-commitment/pages/progress-to-december-2023/

[85] Interview with the Data and Digital commitment team, Scottish Government, 30 April 2024

[86] Interview with the Data and Digital commitment team, Scottish Government, 30 April 2024

[87] https://www.gov.scot/publications/open-government-action-plan-2021-to-2025-commitment-3-data-and-digital-commitment/pages/progress-to-december-2023/

[88] https://www.gov.scot/publications/open-government-action-plan-2021-to-2025-commitment-3-data-and-digital-commitment/pages/progress-to-december-2023/

[89] https://www.gov.scot/publications/open-government-action-plan-2021-to-2025-commitment-3-data-and-digital-commitment/pages/progress-to-december-2023/

Actions/ objectives	Key milestones/ activities 2022-2023	Overall status	Notes
		[yellow]	approaches to open data publishing which will form the basis of work on the Digital Division's vision and priorities for open data[90].
Develop a public register of AI algorithms	• Develop a public register of Artificial Intelligence (AI) algorithms	Completed/ On schedule	The Scottish AI Register was formally launched in March 2023 at the Scottish AI Summit. The Register provides information on the Artificial Intelligence (AI) systems in use or in development within the Scottish public sector[91].

Commitment 4: Climate Change

Actions/ objectives	Key milestones/ activities 2022-2023	Overall status	Notes
Core group development and activity from autumn 2021 to spring 2022	• Establish a stakeholder group for co-creation. • Consultation with the stakeholder group	Completed/ On schedule	9 stakeholders across a range of climate and non-climate sectors joined the core co-creation group. Information session held in April 2022. Framing questions were sent out to all stakeholders, of which 5 responded. The 5 responses were shared anonymously with the whole group[92].
Running and management of network spring 2022 to autumn 2025	• Co-draft the network Terms of Reference (ToRs) • Set up a digital platform to house network. • Successfully launch the stakeholder network • Network to advise on engagement activity for Just Transition Sector Plans (JTSPs) • Network to advise on engagement activity for the Climate Change Plan	Limited Progress	The initial ToRs were drafted by the Scottish Government and approved by the stakeholder group. The Climate Policy Engagement Network (CPEN) was launched in January 2023, aiming to widen the existing pool of stakeholders regularly engaged in climate policy, complement and streamline consultative processes, and improve public engagement and participation on key climate change policy milestones. Around 50 organisations joined info sessions on the platform in the first quarter of 2023. One month post launch, the network had over 70 members representing 60+ organisations across a range of different sectors, interest and demographics[93]. The network highlighted 6 opportunities to advise on the upcoming JTSPs using the JTSP discussion papers. More than 10

---

[90] https://www.gov.scot/publications/open-government-action-plan-2021-to-2025-commitment-3-data-and-digital-commitment/pages/progress-to-december-2023/
[91] https://www.gov.scot/publications/open-government-action-plan-2021-to-2025-commitment-3-data-and-digital-commitment/pages/progress-to-december-2023/
[92] https://www.gov.scot/publications/open-government-action-plan-2021-to-2025-commitment-4-climate-change/pages/progress-to-december-2023/
[93] https://www.gov.scot/publications/open-government-action-plan-2021-to-2025-commitment-4-climate-change/pages/progress-to-december-2023/

Actions/ objectives	Key milestones/activities 2022-2023	Current status	Summary of progress to date
		24	stakeholders advised on each opportunity, although it is not known how many of these were network members. Engagement on the Climate Change Plan (CCP) is on hold as publication of the next CCP has been delayed[94].
Overall management and co-ordination of the network	• Deliver six monthly network meetings • Ensure a robust network	Limited progress	Current membership has a wide reach, covering both climate and non-climate organisations, and different geographies and demographics of Scotland. Member organisations include representatives from the public sector, equality groups, community organisations, and academia[95]. The first 6 monthly members network meeting was held in February 2024 with a focus on co-creating an updated ToRs and milestones for the Network[96].

Commitment 5: Participation

Actions/ objectives	Key milestones/activities 2022-2023	Current status	Summary of progress to date
Participation Handbook - developing knowledge and skills across SG	• Develop and deliver participation training for key sets of policy officials and Scottish Government Social Researchers • Evaluate and reflect on training and subsequent participation activity, to develop more tailored training • Work with Open Government Network for Participation to explore options for training and/or roll out of Participation Handbook for civil society • Explore options for including participation in refreshed evaluation training,	Substantial Progress	The Participation Handbook (previously named Participation Framework) was published in February 2023. The open government team conducted pilot training sessions with internal policy teams and discussed the handbook with civil society representatives, and continue to refine and update training content. Participation and lived experience training for a cohort of government social researchers in collaboration with Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC) is expected to take place in the first half of 2024[97]. However, there has been little progress on including participation in refreshed evaluation training. In December 2023, the Government published a Prior Information Notice (PIN) stating its intention to commission a Framework Agreement to support the use of participatory processes and to

---

[94] https://www.gov.scot/publications/open-government-action-plan-2021-to-2025-commitment-4-climate-change/pages/progress-to-december-2023/

[95] Climate Policy Engagement Network (CPEN) Draft Milestones February – August 2024 [unpublished]

[96] Interview with the Climate Change commitment team, Scottish Government, 21 May 2024

[97] https://www.gov.scot/publications/open-government-action-plan-2021-to-2025-participation-commitment/pages/progress-to-december-2023/

	and building on survey evidence. • Develop a Scottish Government wide procurement framework for participation work	 	establish a person-cantered approach across government.
Participation Handbook: embedding equalities and an inclusive approach	• Update Participation Handbook to include an equalities and participation statement and embed ethics, equity and safeguarding principles, standards and guidance • Collaboratively develop a set of guidance on achieving representative samples of society (mini publics, equalities data) • Develop and propose options for a central unit for participation • Collaboratively develop systematic monitoring and evaluation that will be embedded into participation delivery • Design and roll out a programme of training to build capacity on equalities mainstreaming, and consider ways to more explicitly align participation with equalities and human rights • Develop a process and guidance for paying participant expenses and compensating for participant time	Limited Progress	Equalities campaigner Talat Yaqoob conducted a rapid review of the Participation Handbook[98]. Two expert facilitators delivered a series of public workshops to consider equality diversity and inclusive practices with regards to the Participation Handbook, with a final report expected to detail how equalities and inclusive practices will be integrated into the next iteration of the guidance. Meanwhile, the government has developed a draft guide to paying participant expenses and time[99]. Other activities such as developing guidance on representative samples, developing systematic monitoring and evaluation or building capacity on equalities mainstreaming have seen little progress.
Institutionalising Participation and Deliberative Democracy (IPDD) working	• Publish IPDD recommendations on how we can make participation routine and effective.	Limited Progress	The IPDD working group report was published in March 2022 outlining recommendations for developing a broad range of participation and democratic innovations, including

[98] https://www.gov.scot/publications/open-government-action-plan-2021-to-2025-participation-commitment/pages/progress-to-august-2022/
[99] https://www.gov.scot/publications/open-government-action-plan-2021-to-2025-participation-commitment/pages/progress-to-december-2023/

group - reporting and beginning processes of change to make participation routine and effective	• Set out how the Scottish Government will implement the outcomes of the Expert Working Group on IPDD • Establish cross-portfolio working to support the delivery of deliberative democratic processes		routine use of Citizens' Assemblies in Scotland. A [response to the report](#) and its recommendations was issued by Scottish Government on 27 March 2022. The response leaves little scope for taking forward many of the key recommendations of the IPDD report[100]. The open government team are preparing an audit, as recommended by the IPDD report, to determine the governance, budget, skills and experience required to deliver a unit within Scottish Government with responsibility for participation[101].
Embedding Open Government principles in the planning, conduct and outputs of annual Citizens' Assemblies	• Support the delivery of annual Citizens' Assemblies from 2022 to meet the values and principles set out by the Expert Working Group on IPDD	Not started/ delayed	Annual Citizens Assemblies are being delivered in a different form by relevant policy teams or have been postponed due to budget and resource constraints[102].
Developing an active and inclusive Open Government Network for Participation	• Scope the network in collaboration with civil society, develop terms of reference • Engage the network as a key route to make the Participation Handbook publicly useable and useful. • Consider how the network can be supported to provide shared learning and training opportunities for Ministers, officials and civil society. • Ensure ongoing diversification of the civil network with SCDC.	Limited Progress	The open government team has developed and agreed a communication and engagement plan to diversify the Open Government Network with SCDC but further progress is limited[103].
Review of consultations - spend, approach, monitoring	• Put in place training to ensure that public servants understand the value of consultations.	Substantial Progress	The digital engagement team has updated internal Scottish Government consultation guidance including a new introductory training session to prevent consultation errors. The team

---

[100] Interview with the open government team, Scottish Government, 8 May 2024; Interview with Juliet Swann, civil society co-chair of the Open Government Steering Group, 6 May 2024

[101] https://www.gov.scot/publications/open-government-action-plan-2021-to-2025-participation-commitment/pages/progress-to-december-2023/

[102] https://www.gov.scot/publications/open-government-action-plan-2021-to-2025-participation-commitment/pages/progress-to-december-2023/

[103] https://www.gov.scot/publications/open-government-action-plan-2021-to-2025-participation-commitment/pages/progress-to-december-2023/

	• Restructure Scottish Government internal guidance on consultation to embed it within a wider narrative around participation and engagement. • Launch a new digital engagement service to support the delivery of different digital engagement activities by Scottish Government. • Analyse evaluation data by external analysts to provide insight into the accessibility and effectiveness of consultations. • Launch a new digital engagement hub on www.gov.scot.		has also introduced regular consultation surgeries for Scottish Government colleagues to troubleshoot consultation queries in person and is carrying out some light touch user research with Scottish Government staff[104]. A new digital engagement service is currently in a trial period and analysis of consultation evaluation data has now been completed. The integrated www.gov.scot hub is currently on hold[105].
Monitoring the completion of local authorities delivery of 1% of budgets through participatory budgeting	• Achieve 1% of local authorities' budget spend through participatory budgeting	Completed/ On schedule	In July 2023 COSLA announced that local authorities had exceeded the target of spending 1% of their budgets through participatory budgeting, with a total spend across all councils reaching 1.4% of available budgets. Originally agreed to be met by March 2021, the timeline was revised to recognise the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.
Implementation of the National Participatory Budgeting Strategic Group's framework for the future of participatory budgeting and embedding open government principles	• Continue to support the National Participatory Budgeting Strategic Group (NPBSG) in providing strategic direction for participatory budgeting across Scotland. This includes work to raise awareness of the National PB Framework's priorities and indicators for success, championing	Substantial Progress	The Scottish Government continues to provide secretariat support to the NPBSG, which supported SCDC in the design and delivery of the National PB Conference in September 2022. The open government team has shared a revised proposal for an expanded remit for the NPBSG with open government and community empowerment colleagues[106].

[104] https://www.gov.scot/publications/open-government-action-plan-2021-to-2025-participation-commitment/pages/progress-to-december-2023/
[105] https://www.gov.scot/publications/open-government-action-plan-2021-to-2025-participation-commitment/pages/progress-to-december-2023/
[106] https://www.gov.scot/publications/open-government-action-plan-2021-to-2025-participation-commitment/pages/progress-to-december-2023/

	open government values and principles.		
Embedding Open Government principles in Just Transition participatory budgets	• Explore the use of participatory budgeting in 2021-22 as part of our wider support for community-led climate action. • Identify opportunities at COP26 to develop the concept of participatory budgeting for climate action specifically involving schools and young people. • Work with local authorities to embed climate principles into wider participatory budgeting initiatives. • Embed open government principles in green participatory budgeting.	Substantial Progress	The Scottish Government announced a ten-year £500 million Just Transition Fund targeted at North-East Scotland. Dundee City Council ran the first council-led green participatory budgeting initiative in Scotland, while £1.2 has been allocated to local communities in Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray[107]. Scotland also hosted a Green PB Caravan event on green PB The Green PB Action Group was set up in March 2022 to oversee the development and adoption of Green PB activities and processes across Scotland. The group has co-designed a number of Green PB tools and materials including the Green PB Seal and Badge. A PB and Grant Making online course was made available in 2022 to 750 applicants for free[108].
Embedding Open Government principles in the Community Empowerment Act parliamentary review	• As part of the Scottish Government's review of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, the open government values, principles and approaches will be applied throughout the process.	Limited Progress	Work to review the Act began in 2022. The review was initially due to be completed by the end of 2023 but is now expected in early 2024[109].
Embedding Open Government principles in the National Performance Framework (NPF) refresh / Using best practice approaches to support high quality engagement and participation, while	• Early engagement on the practical applications of open government principles to the NPF • Collaborative development across NPF refresh process of a set of outcomes and indicators that are transparent, accountable and have been influenced by participatory processes.	Substantial progress	The Scottish Government has established an Expert Advisory Group made up of leaders from across Scotland to advise on the process for the Review of National Outcomes. Some members of this group are joining with other stakeholders to test out and prototype a framework for wellbeing conversations. The review has included wide-ranging desk-based research, a written consultation, a call for evidence to organisations and experts, and expert

---

[107] https://www.gov.scot/publications/open-government-action-plan-2021-to-2025-participation-commitment/pages/progress-to-december-2023/

[108] https://www.gov.scot/publications/open-government-action-plan-2021-to-2025-participation-commitment/pages/progress-to-november-2022/

[109] https://www.gov.scot/publications/open-government-action-plan-2021-to-2025-participation-commitment/pages/progress-to-december-2023/

undertaking work to review the National Outcomes	• Conduct consultations, a call for evidence, desk-based research and stakeholder meetings to inform the Review of National Outcomes • Develop an implementation plan and set of resources to support the use of the reviewed NPF.		stakeholder meetings[110]. The revised NPF is due to be published in late 2024 following Scottish Government Cabinet approval for the proposed changes and scrutiny by the Scottish Parliament.
Embedding participation as a core skill in a centre of expertise	• Develop a way of bringing together expertise to deliver priority reform projects. This will include embedding an equalities-focused approach to the Participation Handbook across ways of working and addressing reform priorities.	**Not started/ delayed**	Work to embed participation as a core skill in a centre of expertise is delayed due to resource constraints[111].
Improving children and young people's participation in decision-making and policy design	• Support the delivery of the UNCRC (Scotland) (Bill). Article 12 of the UNCRC makes it clear that young people have a right to have their views heard, and for those views to be taken seriously • Develop the Children and Young Persons Participation Framework Agreement • Co-create a Young Persons Participation Toolkit with Young People to support policy teams • Support the delivery of the Children and Young Peoples Takeovers.	**Substantial Progress**	The UNCRC (Scotland) (Bill) was approved on 7 December 2023 and became an Act on 16 January 2024. The Right Way website was launched in April 2023 while the Children and Families Directorate funded £61,157 across 2021/22 – 2022/23 to aid UNCRC Implementation[112]. The Children's Rights Unit (CRU) issued a Prior Information Notice (PIN) in January 2023 announcing its intention to develop a Children and Young People's (CYP) Participation Framework agreement, The CYP Framework is expected to launch in 2024. The Children's Right Unit is currently working with policy colleagues and stakeholders to reimagine the Takeover Model to ensure the voice of children and young people are being listened to and acted upon[113].

[110110] https://www.gov.scot/publications/open-government-action-plan-2021-to-2025-participation-commitment/pages/progress-to-december-2023/

[111] https://www.gov.scot/publications/open-government-action-plan-2021-to-2025-participation-commitment/pages/progress-to-december-2023/

[112112] https://www.gov.scot/publications/open-government-action-plan-2021-to-2025-participation-commitment/pages/progress-to-december-2023/

[113113] https://www.gov.scot/publications/open-government-action-plan-2021-to-2025-participation-commitment/pages/progress-to-december-2023/