



Robert Nicol

Chief Officer – Environment and Economy

www.cosla.gov.uk

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Regional Partnerships for the Future

- COSLA is the representative voice of Local Government in Scotland
- We represent the national, political views of elected members
- I lead a small team which has responsibility for economic development, planning, transport and environment policy, among other issues
- We also feed into corporate objectives such as the reform of public services and the current Local Governance Review

Regional Partnerships for the Future

I'm going to talk about:

- Regional collaboration and what this may mean for climate action
- The opportunity presented by public sector reform and the Local Governance Review
- The importance of Local Democracy and Accountability



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Regional collaboration is a major theme in public policy development, including:

- **The Enterprise and Skills Review - published last summer and propose regional partnerships building on growth and city deals**
- **The Review of the National Transport Strategy – published in 2019 and is also reviewing transport governance**
- **The Planning Bill – Stage 3 of the Bill next year**

The challenge is that these reforms have developed largely separately and over different timescales and do not tackle climate change directly.

So how can we integrate reform in a way which is helpful to action on climate change?



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The Local Governance Review, which is ongoing, can help – responses are encouraged!

democracymatters@gov.scot

Strand 2 of the Review involves proposing changes to governance, the enhancement of power and accountability or changes to ways of working that can improve outcomes, reduce inequality, and improve democracy locally.

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What does this mean for climate action?

- Climate Change is a public policy challenge and is therefore relevant to public sector reform
- The public sector needs to be equipped to deal with the challenge of climate change, the same as any other.
- The tools it will use are ones which the Local Governance Review can help provide – greater autonomy, powers to raise revenue and invest in infrastructure etc

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Local Democracy and Accountability are vital:

- Some of the policy choices will be hugely difficult and potentially unpopular
- Budgets are under huge strain and this pressure cannot be resolved by regional collaboration alone
- Behaviour change – indeed societal change seems to be inevitable on some scale. Public sector leadership is, therefore, crucial
- Local democracy can make people part of the decision making process. This does not lessen the challenge but might offer solutions that would otherwise be unattainable

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Enhancing local democracy has consequences for the type of reform we deliver:

- We need to get the right balance between localism and regionalism, or we will end up with a centralised tier at the regional level distanced from the needs and reality of local communities
- There can be no single model for collaboration which means there are only bottom up solutions. This makes sense if we put place making at the heart of policy development
- This will take time, effort and money to get right and will require commitment from both Local and Scottish Government and wider public sector

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What does this mean for COSLA?

- I would certainly want climate change to be viewed as THE challenge which the Scottish public sector will face in the coming decades
- Strong local governance will be key to integrating the public sector's multifaceted response
- While we be responding to the debate on the 2050 target our focus remains on how we respond practically to climate change



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I don't have the answers, but that is okay...

... as public sector reform is not about providing the answers but about equipping the public sector and communities to come up with their own solutions.



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robertn@cosla.gov.uk

0131 474 9241

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