



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

# Scotland's Future Forum Annual Report 2020-21

20 January 2022

Reference: SPCB (2022) Paper 03

## Executive summary

1. Scotland's Futures Forum is the Scottish Parliament's futures think-tank. It is formally constituted as a limited company and is owned by the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, which is the company's sole member.
2. This paper provides an update on the Futures Forum's operations. Annex A is an annual report on its activities in 2020-21. Annex B contains the Futures Forum's audited accounts from 2020-21. Annex C contains information on the Futures Forum's board of directors and staffing, which has changed since the annual reporting period.
3. The SPCB is invited to note the 2020-21 annual report and accounts from Scotland's Futures Forum.

## Background

4. The Futures Forum works to stimulate debate on Scotland's long-term future, looking beyond the electoral cycle and exploring on a non-party basis the challenges and opportunities that Scotland faces.
5. Its work is governed by a board of directors that is chaired by the Presiding Officer and composed of both MSPs and non-MSPs. Full information on the current board membership and staffing is contained in Annex C.
6. The Futures Forum's status working at arm's length from the Parliament allows it to partner with Committees and a range of external organisations, and to support MSPs and others to engage with issues in less formal settings.

## Issues and options

7. The annual report and accounts cover the Futures Forum's activities in the financial year 2020-21. For a large proportion of the year, Futures Forum staff were supporting other offices to complete priority work as identified by the Parliament in light of the Covid-19 pandemic.

8. Despite that, the Futures Forum managed to support long-term thinking in a variety of ways. In particular, we concluded and reported on our long-running [Scotland 2030 Programme](#), which identified key questions and challenges emerging from the programme, as well as 10 ideas for the future.

9. The report fed directly into the opening event of the 2020 Festival of Politics, hosted by the Presiding Officer, on Scotland in 2030. The report also provided the context for the Futures Forum's status as lead partner in the Festival, with Futures Forum staff an integral part of the team that planned and delivered the Festival.

10. Since the annual report period, the Futures Forum has refreshed its board membership and begun planning its work over the 2021-26 session of Parliament. The board has agreed an overall focus on Scotland in 2045, both linking to the current climate change targets and considering our future more broadly. Specific work will be conducted under a theme each year; the 2022 theme will be the future of democracy.

11. Overall, the work of the Futures Forum is intended to be a resource for the Parliament, and Scotland more generally, in supporting the national debate to include consideration of the long term.

## Governance

12. The SPCB is the sole company member of Scotland's Futures Forum and is therefore entitled to receive reports on its activities.

## Resource implications

13. The Parliament provides 100% of the Futures Forum's budget each year. This covers the costs (including VAT) of a part-time Head of Business at grade 5 (0.8 FTE) and a Business Co-ordinator at grade 2 (0.95 FTE). Both staff are employed on secondment from the Scottish Parliamentary Service. There is also funding for events and projects.

14. In 2020-21, the Futures Forum received a budget of £126,500 from the SPCB. This represented a reduction of £20,000 from its planned budget, which was agreed as part of the Parliament's response to the Covid-19 pandemic and

in light of the reduced opportunities for events. As noted before, the Futures Forum's staff also supported other business areas.

15. The Futures Forum also benefits from support from the Parliamentary Service, such as in event organisation and the preparation and auditing of accounts. It works on a co-production model to access resources of external organisations.

## **Publication Scheme**

16. It is recommended that this paper should be published in line with the SPCB's Publication Scheme.

## **Next steps**

17. The SPCB will continue to receive reports on the Futures Forum's work on an annual basis, and on request if required.

## **Decision**

18. The SPCB is invited to note the 2020-21 annual report and accounts from Scotland's Futures Forum.

### **Scotland's Futures Forum**

January 2022