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6 April 2023

Dear Open Government Scotland Civil Society Group

Thank you for sending your correspondence dated 30th March 2023 to Humza Yousaf MSP, the newly elected First Minister. I am replying as the Minister with responsibility for Open Government.

I welcome this opportunity to further highlight and advance the importance of the Open Government agenda as part of this new Cabinet. I intend for this letter to reaffirm Scottish Government's unwavering commitment to embedding the principles and values of Open Government across our democratic system.

The new First Minister for Scotland has committed to leading a progressive, socially just Scotland. Our Cabinet remains committed to making Scotland's democracy as participatory as possible.

The decisions government faces remain difficult and complicated. Tackling these must involve openness and transparency as well as listening to and empowering the voices of those who will be most affected. The Scottish Government understands that involving the public in decision making is crucial to ensuring a democracy that is built on trust, diversity, fairness and inclusion - where people recognise that they are at the heart of policy and decision making.

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Tha Ministearanna h-Alba, an luchd-comhairleachaidh sònraichte agus Rùnaire Maireannach fo chumhachan Achd Coiteachaidh (Alba) 2016. Faicibh www.lobbying.scot

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Scotland has made notable progress in realising a more inclusive, democratic and fairer society, where everyone has the right to participate in decisions that will affect them, their families and communities. As you know, we are early in the delivery of our third Open Government Action Plan, and our Open Government commitments have already demonstrated progress and impact in opening up the work of government to the public. This is a testament to the benefits of the partnership between government and civil society. There is always more we can do, and we are committed to continuing to collaborate with civil society to achieve this.

This government has made a number of commitments to participatory and deliberative democracy. These include more regular Citizens' Assemblies, establishing a Citizens' Assembly for those under the age of 16 to ensure the voices of the future are heard, and taking a person-centred approach to Covid Recovery.

These commitments build on work we have delivered that has enabled people to influence policy making. This includes our Social Security Experience Panels and Client Panels, the Citizens' Jury on Covid, the delegation of financial decision making power to communities through Participatory Budgeting, and supporting public involvement in the co-design our National Care Service. Together these represent steps in the process of realising government and civil society's collective aim as part of the Open Government Partnership to institutionalise participatory democracy. Through the work of Open Government in Scotland, I am confident we can build and expand on these high quality examples to involve people across the work of government.

This work has helped Scotland to continue to be viewed on an international stage as a reforming country that is seeking to provide opportunities for people to be involved in government decisions - and this is an accolade I am determined to retain. The increased use of participatory processes will help this government deliver on ambitions and tackle challenges. Scotland will continue to do more to inspire others to expand on their Open Government initiatives, and will always look outwards to learn from others across the world.

I am proud of the work that has been delivered in Scotland to improve fiscal transparency, to take an ethical approach to data and digital technology, and improving ways to involve people in high priority work such as climate action and reforms to health and social care. I recognise more must be done to embed participatory democracy. I will continue to uphold and advance our commitments to Open Government, to public engagement and participation, and to advocate for an Open Government approach across all our work.

Achieving a society where people can engage with government on decisions that affect them cannot be realised without partnership with civil society. Our collaboration is important and I thank you for your continued support and dedication to delivering our Open Government Action Plan. I would like to reaffirm that the Scottish Government continues to welcome challenge and collaboration as we work together to deliver innovative solutions to benefit the people and communities we serve. I remain committed to supporting civil society in Scotland to better fulfil their role as equal partners in delivering our Open Government Action Plan.

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It is a privilege to continue to deliver and drive the important work of Open Government in my capacity as Minister for Parliamentary Business. I look forward to working closely with the Open Government Civil Society Group to create a more open, democratic and inclusive society.

Kind regards



GEORGE ADAM

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