

# Audit Scotland's annual statement on sustainable economic growth for 2023/24

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## Background

1. The Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010, section 32(1)(a) requires listed public bodies to publish a statement on sustainable economic growth as soon as possible after the end of the financial year.
2. This statement sets out the steps that Audit Scotland has taken in 2023/24 to promote and increase sustainable growth through the exercise of its functions.
3. Further information on this and our audit work is contained in our Annual Report and Accounts 2023/24. This is available on our [website](#).

## Introduction

4. Audit Scotland is a statutory body that supports the Auditor General and the Accounts Commission in making sure public money in Scotland is used properly, efficiently and effectively by undertaking audits and investigations of Scottish public bodies.
5. To ensure objectivity in our work, Audit Scotland is independent of the Scottish Government and Scottish ministers. The independence, quality and timeliness of audit are essential to the public interest.
6. Maintaining our independence from those we audit limits our ability to share services. However, where sharing is possible, we have done so including a joint contract, with The Care Inspectorate, for lease cars. A joint contract with Northern Ireland Audit Office for Government Actuary work and a shared service agreement with the Central Government Procurement Shared Services.

## Sustainable economic growth and contribution to the National Performance Framework

7. Audit Scotland contributes to sustainable economic growth and the National Performance Framework **as an employer**. For example:
  - Our professional trainee programme remains one of Scotland's largest public sector accountancy training schemes targeted at 16–24-year-olds. We have 49 graduate trainees working towards professional qualifications and three modern apprentices, thereby increasing the skills base of Audit Scotland, and Scotland in general.
  - This year colleagues received an average of 18.5 days training and personal development to increase knowledge, skills, efficiency and effectiveness.
  - Not all the work we do is carried out by Audit Scotland staff. We contribute to economic activity by appointing firms of accountants to carry out audits on behalf of the Auditor General and the Accounts Commission and specialists to contribute to performance audits. This amounted to approximately £8.1 million during 2023/24.

- Audit Scotland adheres to the Fair work guidance as follows:
  - Engagement with a recognised trade union
  - Accredited Living Wage employer
  - A commitment to tackling job insecurity through the minimisation of fixed term contracts, a commitment to non-compulsory redundancies and non-adoption of zero hours contracts.
  - A commitment to increase levels of diversity within Audit Scotland's workforce.
  - A statutory duty to mitigate socio-economic disadvantage.
  - A commitment to promote equality of opportunity through recruitment and selection with appropriate training provided to mitigate bias and unfairness.
- 8. As Scotland's **public sector audit** agency Audit Scotland has an interest in the extent to which the Scottish Government is making progress against the outcomes contained in the National Performance Framework. We do this by carrying out performance, best value and financial audits to provide assurance that money and resources are being used properly, efficiently and effectively and to highlight areas for improvement.
- 9. We audited 228 sets of accounts and completed five Best Value audits eight statutory reports and 25 other reports and outputs.
- 10. We met with, and gave oral and written evidence to, a wide range of parliamentary committees and briefings to MSPs, with a total of 77 parliamentary engagements over the year. Alongside that formal reporting, we have responded to consultations and calls for evidence by parliamentary committees, providing submissions to 21 Scottish Parliament and Scottish Government policy consultations during 2023/24.
- 11. We produce performance audits and overview reports on issues which have a direct impact on people's daily lives. This ranges from the overview of key public services, reviews of major reforms and projects, to exploring how public bodies respond to the key issues facing Scotland. Reports include briefing papers, update reports, blogs, and performance audit reports. We supplement our audit reports with a variety of supporting products, such as videos and animations, to reach a wider audience and get the audit messages across more effectively.

## Countering fraud

- 12. Public audit has an important role in raising awareness about fraud as well as helping to prevent and report on fraud. We report on frauds identified during the year and have responsibility to review how public bodies have discharged their counter-fraud responsibilities.
- 13. In July 2023, we published our [Fraud and irregularity update](#) on cases auditors reported on during 2022/23. From 2023/24, we share information where control weaknesses have contributed to fraud and irregularity on a quarterly basis in our [Technical Bulletins](#).
- 14. Audit Scotland coordinates the National Fraud Initiative, an exercise that matches datasets across the public sector to identify potential fraud and errors such as overpayments. The

next biennial NFI report will be published during 2024. More information is available at our [Counter-fraud webpage](#).