UK 2070, Agenda 2030, the New Urban Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals - what do our international commitments mean for reducing spatial inequalities in the UK?

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UK2070 [i] is currently considering the deep-rooted inequalities across the UK and exploring through national enquiry and debate the nature of these problems and the actions needed to address them. This paper explores how international agreements which all the UK nations have committed to might inform this thinking. It will also explore how the commission's work can support the UK deliver on them and measure progress.

In 2015 and 2016 all nations within the umbrella of the United Nations came together and signed a series of both legally binding and non-binding agreements focussed on climate change, sustainable development, poverty eradication, pollution, housing and infrastructure adequacy, food security and humanitarian issues and the related governance and financing issues. In this paper the focus will be Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda For Sustainable Development (Agenda 2030) [ii] and the New Urban Agenda (NUA) [iii] but for completeness the other agreements were: The Sendai Framework for disaster risk reduction (2015) [iv], The Addis Ababa Action Agenda which addresses Financing for development (2015) [v], The Paris Climate change agreement (2015) [vi] and The Agenda for Humanity - which is the world humanitarian summit framework (2016). [vii] A synopsis of these is to be found on the RTPI website in a paper entitled Global Challenges and international agreements on sustainable development. [viii] Since 2007 more than half the world's population live in cities or urban centres. By 2030 estimates show that cities will be home to 60% of the global population, increasing to about 68.4% by 2050. Urbanisation is thus a key development trend. Since these agreements were signed more reports have underlined the need for concerted action. On Climate change the Intergovernmental Panel

on Climate Change [(ix)] published this year is the technical report that will feed into the Katowice Climate Change conference in December 2018 which will review progress on the Paris agreement. The OECD report Divided Cities [(x)] underlies the continuing challenge of inequality globally, whilst their upcoming report Financing Global Future will look at infrastructure investment and emissions. The 2018 OECD [(xi)] report concluded that most available measures consistently show large and persistent regional difference globally. Across the UK the difference between the most and least productive regions are one of the largest in the OECD. OECD stated that the poor performing regions in the UK "have not been showing signs of catching up over the past few years." [(x)]

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

In September 2015 after an open and consultative approach, all 193 UN members states committed to Agenda 2030 which contains 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The 17 SDGs are supported by 169 agreed global targets and 234 indicators to be monitored from 2015–2030. The targets are designed to balance the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. The theory is that they are integrated and indivisible thus aligning with key planning concepts. The UK government actively engaged in the development of the goals. The SDGs replaced the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Whilst the latter were primarily directed at supporting the less economically developed nations the SDGs are applicable to all 193 member countries including all the UK nations. Agenda 2030 is underpinned by the principle of universality – that the Goals are shared by all UN member states who are expected to prepare strategies for how they are going to implement and achieve the SDGs. These national strategies should focus on the domestic achievement of the Goals and reflect the local context. The Universality concept also recognises that responsibility for delivery of the SDGs is not just the responsibility of National and Local Government but also for stakeholders and communities. Thus, the UK2070 Commission should consider how its objectives and aspirations align with the international commitments the UK has made and where and how their research, finding and recommendations align and could contribute to the UK delivering the SDGs.

Under Article 47 of Agenda 2030, Governments have the primary responsibility for follow up and review, at the sub-national and national levels, in relation to the progress made in

implementing the goals and targets. Individual countries are expected to establish regular and inclusive review processes and where necessary develop new systems for ensuring high quality, accessible, timely and reliable disaggregated data to measure progress at the national and sub-national levels. Regional bodies and international agencies were given the responsibility for regional and global follow-ups and reviews. In the UK the Office of National Statistics (ONS) have been tasked with the task of establishing data sets and monitoring progress on them.

The SDGs and UK2070

Whilst all the SDGs have relevance to the issues under consideration by the UK2070 Commission, consideration of a sample illustrates this:

- SDG 1 End poverty in all its forms everywhere;
- SDG 5 Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls;
- SDG 8 Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all;
- SDG 9 Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation;
- SDG10 reduce inequalities within and among countries;
- SDG11 Make cities and human settlements inclusive safe, resilient and sustainable; and
- SDG12 Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.

SDG Targets[ii] and their relevance to UK2070

A more detailed look at some of the targets supporting the SDGs only serves to underline the aspirations in Agenda 2030, remembering all UN Nations have signed up to this for themselves and for other nations and its pertinence to the work of the UK2070 Commission. For example: Target 8.2.1 Annual growth rate per employed person; Target 10.1.1 Growth rate of household expenditure or income per capita among the bottom 40% of the population and the total population are all pertinent to the issues UK2070 is exploring.

The targets of SDG 11, known as the cities and settlement SDG, are relevant the commission's explorations. These are:

- Target 11.1 - By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums

- Target 11.2 - By 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons

- Target 11.3 - By 2030, enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries

- Target 11.6 - By 2030, reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality and municipal and other waste management

- Target 11.a - Support positive economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas by strengthening national and regional development planning The New Urban Agenda. Each SDG has around ten supporting targets.

The New Urban Agenda (NUA)

The NUA was adopted in 2016 in Quito at Habitat III. It both complements and reinforces the urban related SDG targets. NUA's effective implementation is also expected to contribute to the achievements of many other global agreements such as the Paris agreement and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. It builds on SDG 11, focusing on what needs to be done to ensure cities and human settlements of all scale

deliver sustainable development. Whilst there are therefore substantive linkages between SDG 11 and NUA the latter goes further to address a wide range of actions necessary for making places spatially effective for sustainable development and details strategic actions necessary for ensuring that cities and human settlements support and facilitate the implementation of the whole range of SDGs. Many of these align with areas of exploration within the UK2070 propositions to be explored in the Call For Evidence. From the perspective of the exploration of UK2070 it is important to note that the NUA clearly articulates strategic spatial and governance frameworks such as national urban policies, legislation, spatial planning and local finances as tools for the implementation of the SDGs. The NUA addresses ways in which cities are planned, designed, managed, governed and financed to achieve sustainable development goals, making it a complimentary driver for the achievement of all the SDGs.

How effectively we advance the NUA will have implications for achievement of the 2030 Agenda. The propositions articulated in the UK2070 Commission's Call for Action are thus highly pertinent to this in a UK Context. The NUA addresses the means and approaches on how cities need to be planned, designed, managed, governed and financed to achieve sustainable development goals. The NUA has three aspirational commitments: social inclusion and ending poverty; sustainable and inclusive urban prosperity and opportunities for all; and environmentally sustainable and resilient urban development. This resonates with the UK2070 Commission's aspirations in terms of recommendations for action for an approach to developing inclusive and sustainable frameworks for addressing spatial inequalities in terms of the form and content of frameworks including scope and horizon; the requirements for leadership governance and research; processes for engagement delivery and review; enhanced regulatory and fiscal regimes and competences and capabilities. In 2018, the Kuala Lumpur Declaration on Cities 2030 [xii] adopted at the 9th Session of the World Urban Forum (WUF) the role of cities in achieving and contributing to the success of the Agenda 2030 and NUA targets was reaffirmed. The NUA does not have a standalone monitoring framework, it relies on other urban monitoring such as the SDG's monitoring framework and the comprehensive City Prosperity Initiative (CPI) tools developed by UN-Habitat. [xiii] The NUA also aligns with the International Guidelines for Urban and Territorial planning adopted in 2015 by the UN. [xiv]

The UK approach to delivery

In 2017, the UK Government published a report on its approach to Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals. [xv] This looked both at how the UK will act globally to support other countries in their delivery of the goal as well as the beginnings of the approach domestically. The Government said that Single Departmental Plans will incorporate SDG targets, with the aspiration that from May 2018 many plans have aligned their objectives to the SDGs. However, this does not yet amount to a specific delivery plan for the SDGs and there is no published review of policy coherence issues or gaps analysis. The Government's stated objective is important, "We are committed to ensuring that the UK is an inclusive society for all, building a country and economy that works for everyone and reducing inequalities through our development programmes. We are achieving this by… promoting economic growth and participation by all, empowering and legislating against discrimination and devolving greater powers to the regions and constituent nations of the UK." [xvi] Responsibility for the Goals being met in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland on devolved issues lies with their respective administrations. Although methods to implement the Goals may differ across the administrations of the UK, they all share the visions inherent in the Goals, Agenda 2030 and the devolved nations. The Governments of Wales and Scotland are building upon existing work programmes that align to the SDGs.

Wales

The Welsh Government has introduced the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015l. [xvii] This Act sets ambitious, long-term goals for Wales. It provides 44 public bodies including the Welsh Government with a legally-binding aim to work towards seven goals set out in the Act which support the principle of sustainable development. The focus is on improving social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being in Wales. It sets out the five ways of working which it envisages will contribute to maximising the benefits achieved across the seven goals. Progress will be measured through a set of 46 National Indicators and will form the basis of understanding of how Wales is contributing to the well-being goals and the SDGs. The data for these indicators is primarily official statistics products. They are under the responsibility of the Chief Statistician of the Welsh Government. They are published on an open data platform with interactive and multi-functional views for users. The platform shows how they map to the well-being goals and SDGs, demonstrating how Welsh outcomes are aligned with the international context. The Welsh Government is also

working alongside our team at Office for National Statistics (ONS) to fill some of the data gaps relating to the SDGs.

Scotland

The National Performance Framework (NPF) [xviii] is Scotland's main mechanism to deliver the UN SDGs. The NPF was recently reviewed following a wide consultation process and sets out the vision for Scotland. This vision is described through Scotland performs [xix] supported by rights based approach, set out in Scotland's human rights plan. There are 11 National Outcomes, 81 National Indicators underpinning the outcomes together with a set of values and a "collective purpose" for Scotland focusing on creating a more successful country with opportunities for all to flourish through increased well-being, and sustainable and inclusive economic growth. The NPF and SDGs share the same ambition to encourage the change necessary to tackle the most challenging issues facing our societies and planet. The SDGs have been embedded into the NPF by mapping the goals to the outcomes and aligning the indicators where appropriate and possible. The NPF is enshrined in statute through the Community Empowerment (Scotland Act) 2015 [xx] which places a duty on Scottish ministers to review the National Outcomes every five years. The next review is due to take place in 2023. The Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) has set up and coordinates an SDG Network to help increase public awareness and engagement around the goals. This coalition has also created a platform for the goals [xxi] – www.globalgoals.scot – to share the views of people and organisations on how to grow the SDG movement in Scotland Departmental Annual reports.

Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland's Sustainable Development Strategy was published in 2010 and the Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006 [xxii] placed a sustainable development duty on all public authorities. Northern Ireland will be included in the UK voluntary national review.

How are countries in the UN are reporting on Voluntary National Reviews?

In the last 3 years, countries have had an opportunity to report on their progress of implementation of SDG targets through voluntary national reviews. UN Habitat synthesis report on SDG 11 [xxiii] summarises what these voluntary national reviews tell us. There is a

long way to go and a variety of approaches. There are examples of the integration of SDG targets within national development plans and other urban strategies. UN Habitat suggest Urban targets require engagements at the national and sub-national/city levels.

How is UK doing on SDGs?

The UK government has committed to a full monitoring report in 2019 where the UK will report on it progress to the UN. This gives the opportunity for work from the UK2070 Commission to feed in and the commission the opportunity to encourage those contributing to UK2070 to explore the synergies of their work with this agenda and work programme. The House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee published a report on the UK progress with the SDGs on 26 April 2017. The Government responded to the report in November 2017. [xxiv] The report made 11 recommendations, which ranged from awareness raising to business engagement and to a perceived delay in the work on measuring monitoring and reporting being led by the ONS developing measurement statistics. The government response said, "the UK was at the forefront of negotiating the Goals and we are determined to be at the forefront of delivering them too." They outlined why embedding the Goals in a department's Single Departmental Plan was the most effective way to do this. Departmental plans inform and direct the priorities of departments throughout the year. The Government response mirrored the new Urban agenda in suggesting that partnership and multi-stakeholder participation in the process is also essential and encouraged businesses, civil society organisations and individuals to also pick up the baton for both promoting and delivering the Goals in the UK thus giving licence to UK2070 to engage and make suggestions.

Measuring up

In July 2018 the UK stakeholders for sustainable development group in partnership with the All-Party Parliamentary Group for the UN Global Goals for Sustainable Development published a report on UK progress entitled *Measuring Up*. [xxv] They described their research as giving a snapshot of UK progress on the SDGs. Their view of how the UK was doing was that it was "a mixed bag". Their headlines figures concluded that the UK is performing well on nearly a quarter of all the indicators (24%, and a traffic light indicator of green). For 57% of indicators there is either gap in policy or poor performance on those indicators (amber). 15% are rated red which means there is little to no policy in place, or where performance

on these indicators is poor. In their view the UK is performing best on Goal 3 Good Health & Wellbeing; Goal 4 Quality Education; and Goal 17 Partnerships to Achieve the Goals. Significantly for the UK2070 Commission's work they concluded that the most vulnerable people and places in our society are increasingly being left behind. The UK2070 Commission work in further illuminating the imbalances in Economic activity and work to identify policy interventions and mechanisms for collaboration to address the imbalances between region and nations is timely, critical and can support this key aspect of implementation of the SDGs and the NUA.

The importance of data and measuring progress.

The UN describe urban data [xxiii] as having large variations in quality and availability, with capital cities and large towns having more data with better quality than small towns. For example, on average countries are only able to report on less than one third of the global indicators for SDG 11, and only 3 per cent reported on more than 5 indicators. What has evidently emerged is that there are real constraints in terms of data. In the UK the Office for National Statistics (ONS) is responsible for reporting our data. The ONS describes its role as to source the appropriate UK data for the global indicators; provide data to the international organisations responsible for each indicator, known as Custodian Agencies, who will report them to the United Nations; analyse the data so that we can put it into context; and make the data available to everybody using an online tool and supporting reports. To do this this they consulted on their approach to measuring and reporting UK progress against the global SDGs indicators. They first reported progress in 2017 and on 7th November 2018 ONS published their second progress report [xxvi]. This looked at how much data has been collected for the global SDGs indicators by ONS for the UK. It also explains what work we are doing to measure progress towards the SDGs. This is not an update on UK progress towards meeting the Goals themselves, which will be presented in the Voluntary National Review to the UN High-Level Political Forum in July 2019. To date, ONS say they have data for 64% of the global SDG indicators, up from 39% in their first report; 61 indicators have been added in the last year meaning there is some data covering nearly all the Goals.

Meanwhile they have created an SDG reporting platform called the National Reporting Platform (NRP) [xxviii]. The "alpha" version is live and is a treasure trove of information on

where we have measures and where we do not. It also helps in understanding the importance and implications of this work and its relevance to UK2070's consideration. By clicking on each goal, the platform takes you through to the indicator set and reports progress. The site is based on an open source version developed by the United States government with whom ONS are working. ONS are seeking feedback on the platform in this alpha phase.

ONS, SDGs and a Focus on Geography and its relevance to UK2070

ONS have said that a key issue raised in consultation responses was the need to focus on geography at the lowest possible level. If one looks at the SDG targets and UK data sets the ability to break it down at local and regional level is of critical importance to the question of regional and intra-regional inequality and vital to monitoring progress. In response to this demand ONS set up the "Geography Accelerator Project" [xxvii]. The project includes among other things; improving the geographic disaggregation of global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicators, improving the mapping functionality for the national reporting platform and adding geocodes to data on the NRP, to ensure they are ready for mapping and geographical analysis. This could be invaluable both to the work of UK2070 and local government, sub national and regional partnerships. ONS have also participated in an aspect UN Statistics Division initiative to develop an open SDG data hub [xx] aimed at exploring new ways of producing and communicating geographical data. [xxix] One challenge for ONS is monitoring progress for the whole of the UK can be challenging because data are often not collected or reported in the same way across the four countries. They are working with the devolved administrations to ensure that we provide an aggregated figure wherever appropriate. They will present figures for each country to ensure full UK coverage where different data sources or definitions mean that we cannot provide a single UK figure for an indicator. Currently, of the 157 indicators that we have data for, 62% of these have UK coverage.

Measuring what matters

One issue that consideration of the UK2070 and Agenda 2030 together raises is the whole question of what we measure and how we might measure inequality in a more holistic sense. A number of UK2070 think pieces are exploring what is measured and what should be.

Conclusions and recommendations for UK2070

There is much synergy between both the aspirations of Agenda 2030, the SDGs, the NUA and the work of UK2070 commission. The UK 2070 commission work in illuminating the imbalances in economic activity and on-going work to identify policy interventions and mechanisms to address the imbalances between regions and nations is timely, critical and can support this key aspect of implementation of the SDGs and the NUA. The commission could therefore:

1. Consider how its objectives and aspirations align with the international commitments the UK has made in Agenda 2030, the SDGs and NUA and where and how their research, finding and recommendations align and could contribute to the UK delivering the SDGs.

2. When encouraging or commissioning research, request that it specifically considers how their finding and recommendations align and could contribute to the UK delivering the SDGs. A powerful example of this is the UK2070 think piece by the Manchester Urban Institute entitled Measuring Spatial inequality what we know and what we should know (i).

3. Explore ways to feed in to The UK government SDG monitoring progress report and national Voluntary report to the UN.

4. Engage with ONS on their data work in particular (a) give feedback on the alpha phase of the National reporting platform and (b) encourage and support their geography accelerator project and stressing the critical importance of disaggregating data geographically to the lowest relevant scale.

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