

# Festival of Politics 2020 begins on Thursday

**This festival takes place from Thursday 19 to Saturday 21 November 2020 and the entire programme is free to attend.**

The programme being run in partnership with The Scottish Parliament's think tank, [Scotland's Futures Forum](#) (SFF) puts the spotlight on the key issues facing society, with Covid-19 and the nation's recovery from the pandemic being a core theme throughout. There are many sessions all available to watch online and truly there is something for everyone with America, racism, doughnut economics, the future of work and female equality all being discussed.

On Saturday at 7.30pm there is a session when the Presiding Officer, the Rt Hon Ken Macintosh will be speaking to Elif Shafak. Hailed as 'one of the most important writers at work today' (The Independent) and with fans including Professor Mary Beard and the First Minister of Scotland, Elif Shafak's most recent novel, *Ten Minutes, 38 Seconds in this Strange World*, was shortlisted for last year's Booker Prize.

Elif Shafak holds a Ph.D. in political science and is an advocate for women's rights, for LGBT rights and for freedom of speech. She joins the Presiding Officer to discuss her latest non-fiction book, *How to Stay Sane in an Age of Division*.

# Opening event

SFF has today published the findings of its 2030 programme, looking at what sort of country Scotland might become, and what the nation's response might be to the great changes of the next decade and beyond.

The report examines the challenges and opportunities posed by climate change, technological innovation and an ageing population and will be debated at 'Scotland 2030: What do we want, and how can we get there?', the event which will open the Festival.

The work, which aims to help parliamentarians think about long term challenges, outside of electoral cycles and party politics, found that:

- Around half a million babies are due to be born in Scotland in the 2020s. To give every one of them the best chance in life, fundamental change is required to end child poverty – either through 'pre-distribution' or radical redistribution via taxation and spending.
- Technological disruptors such as Uber and Amazon will continue to have an impact on jobs and society. We need a school and lifelong education system that helps people adapt to changing circumstances, giving them the freedom to be creative, to take risks and, on occasion, to fail safely.
- To meet our ambitious targets of net zero carbon emissions by 2045, radical change is required in our working lives. There are clear pathways to a more sustainable future if Scotland switches investment towards sectors and industries that bring long-term benefits.
- Scotland need to make more progress on creating gender equal workplaces. Realities of life for women such as menstruation, pregnancy and menopause need to be taken more seriously by employers. Increasing the uptake of paternity leave will also help redress imbalances in the distribution of unpaid work

- Aging and death need to be addressed earlier in life. Most of us will become dependent on other people as we age. We need to tackle the taboo of discussing these things by normalising planning for this inevitability in our 40s and 50s, if we are to support the right care at the end of life.

The forum is also recommending ten ‘ideas for 2030’ to be debated in the Scottish Parliament from the creative suggestions heard during its events. These include a Scottish island test site for autonomous vehicles, ‘digital havens’ with limited internet access – allowing visitors to switch off from their devices – and a Museum of Failure to show the role of failure in the path to achievement and encourage people to embrace risk.

Speaking ahead of the Festival, Chair of the Forum and Presiding Officer, the Rt Hon Ken Macintosh MSP, said: “How we tackle the great issues of the next decade will shape Scotland for generations to come. Climate change, technological advancements and an ageing population all present profound challenges for the country, but also opportunity.

“This report highlights the importance of taking a positive view of the changes we’ll experience by 2030. As the response to the Covid-19 pandemic has shown, people can and do respond positively when life throws up huge challenges. But it has also shown the importance of including people in the process when the decisions on how to respond are made.

“A key part of the Futures Forum’s work, a central theme throughout this programme from all our events, and one of the founding principles on which the Parliament operates, is the importance of including everyone in discussions about our long-term future.

“How we move forward, harness new technologies, create more environmentally sustainable jobs and tackle child poverty are all topics ripe for debate as we look ahead. I am sure it will

be a very interesting discussion at this year's Festival of Politics."

You can find out more and watch the event in full on the Festival of Politics website [here](#).