

New Public Health Minister appointed

Mairi Gougeon has been appointed the Minister for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing in a mini reshuffle at Holyrood.

The MSP for Angus North and Mearns has until now been Minister for Rural Affairs and is set to take on the all-important brief dealing with the nation's health protection during the coronavirus pandemic. The previous Public Health minister, Joe FitzPatrick, resigned on Friday.

The Public Health brief reporting to the Health Secretary means that she will also be responsible for:

- the Covid-19 testing programme
- Health improvement
- Public health and healthy working lives
- Physical activity, sport, sporting events and events legacy
- Problem alcohol use and recovery
- Care Inspectorate
- Carers
- Child and maternal health (excluding mental health)
- Health protection
- Person-centred care
- Self-directed support
- Sexual health

The brief of dealing with drugs policy has been handed to Angela Constance until the next Scottish Parliamentary Election.

Ms Gougeon will be responsible for tackling the pandemic including Covid-19 testing, with the Health Secretary, Jeane Freeman taking the lead on delivery of the vaccinations against the virus.

Edinburgh Northern MSP, Ben Macpherson, will become Minister for Rural Affairs and the Natural Environment supporting Roseanna Cunningham and Fergus Ewing. Mr Macpherson will focus on the impacts of Brexit on the rural economy, support efforts to tackle climate change and protect our wildlife and biodiversity.

Minister for Trade, Investment and Innovation Ivan McKee will take on additional responsibilities for supporting Finance Secretary Kate Forbes as the Scottish Government prepares to publish its Budget early in the new year.

Minister for Europe and International Development Jenny Gilruth is to take on responsibility for Migration.

First Minister Nicola Sturgeon said: "At a crucial time for Scotland, these new appointments ensure that we have a ministerial team fully focused on tackling the many important challenges facing us.

"Mairi Gougeon has proven herself to be a highly effective Rural Affairs minister working with stakeholders, balancing competing interests and taking on difficult policy challenges. She will now be part of the team protecting and improving Scotland's public health, and will play a key role in the pandemic, taking the lead on testing.

"Mairi will work alongside the new Minister for Drugs Policy, Angela Constance, who is tasked specifically with tackling what is another major public health emergency in Scotland.

"Ben Macpherson takes on the environment post at a critical time in our fight against climate change and as we take new steps to protect Scotland's wonderful and diverse natural

environment. Having previously worked on Climate Justice and Climate Finance, Ben will continue our work to protect wildlife, enhance biodiversity and support Scotland's rural economy.

“With responsibility for migration, Jenny Gilruth will be working to tackle the demographic challenge threatening to undermine our economy and our society, and Ivan McKee will assist Kate Forbes in supporting firms through the pandemic, ensuring Scottish Government procurement backs Scottish business and in preparing our Budget early in the new year.”