

[00:00:00.000] - Amanda Aitken

Hello, listeners. If you've been keeping up with Engender's news over the summer, you'll know that in July we got the tragic and unexpected news that our executive director, Emma Ritch, had died suddenly.

[00:00:14.960] - Alys Mumford

As this is the first On the Engender without Emma, we wanted to take a moment to reflect on her life.

[00:00:18.440] - Amanda Aitken

Yeah, Emma was a huge part of on the Engender, and it was her love of podcasts which first brought the idea to life. We're sorry we haven't (yet) made it to the heady heights of This American Life or the West Wing Weekly.

[00:00:33.920] - Alys Mumford

(One day). Regular listeners will be familiar with Emma insight and wit on all of the episodes she appeared on, which was most of them. Her presence on the podcast will very much continue to be felt - any time we mention data for one thing - but we're sure that you, like us, will feel her absence sharply.

[00:00:49.300] - Amanda Aitken

Yeah, most definitely. And I think with data as well, like, in this upcoming episode we mentioned the data klaxon, you know

[00:00:58.740] - Alys Mumford

Yeah we need to actually just make a data klaxon, don't we.

[00:01:02.260] - Amanda Aitken

We need to make a data klaxon in her honour. But also, I think just as editor of this podcast, it's hard because, you know, I spent so many hours, so many days, years now! editing her voice and her incredible laugh that she had and and yeah, I had the joy of getting to edit down when we would all break down in laughter or conversations would go awry, or when we had the occasional swear.

[00:01:35.190] - Alys Mumford

Any time anyone said hello and we all found that for some reason hilarious. Yeah, I would, I would 100% recommend going and having a listen if you are missing Emma's laugh to the wrap up episode we did, which we had some outtakes in - we'll put a link in the show notes - but some outtakes which I think was essentially just sort of seven minutes edited down of Emma guffawing at various things. I always have her voice in my head every time I misspeak being like: "do you wanna take another pass at that economists, Alys?" after I failed to pronounce it several times in a row.

[00:02:07.990] - Amanda Aitken

Oh god yeah.

[00:02:18.120] - Alys Mumford

So for sure, there's just so much of Emma that hasn't made it into the podcast, and it's been an absolute privilege to have been on these recordings with her. So thank you Emma, for joining us all those times. There have been huge numbers of really touching tributes left for Emma, including I'm sure from many of you on our site. We've had motions in the Scottish and UK Parliaments, obituaries in the mainstream press, and even a golden eagle chick named after her, which is pretty perfect for a feisty redhead. Fittingly, Emma's also been named as Glasgow Women's Library inaugural Woman on the Wall, meaning she'll be forever honoured in a place that meant so much to her.

[00:03:03.400] - Amanda Aitken

We'll link to more information about all of these things and more in the show notes. Engender's AGM is on 13 November also, and that will be a chance to hear more about Emma legacy and met online with other Engender members and supporters.

[00:03:19.920] - Alys Mumford

We continue to miss Emma every day and send our love to all of you who feel the same.

[00:03:24.900] - Amanda Aitken

On with the show.

[00:03:44.400]

[jingle]

[00:03:53.400] - Alys Mumford

Hello, and welcome to you on the Engender Scotland's Feminist Policy Podcast. I'm Alys Mumford, and I'm here as always with Amanda Aitken, hi Amanda.

[00:04:01.180] - Amanda Aitken

Hello.

[00:04:01.740] - Alys Mumford

And we are joined today by two policy experts at Engender. We have our policy manager, Jill Wood. Hi, Jill.

[00:04:09.520] - Jill Wood

Hello.

[00:04:11.120] - Alys Mumford

And our Policy and Parliamentary Manager Eilidh Dickson. Hi Eilidh.

[00:04:14.180] - Eilidh Dickson

Hi.

[00:04:15.540] - Alys Mumford

So today we are feeling very new term. Hopefully people have got pencil cases and some newly sharpened pencils. We're going to be looking at what's coming up for women's equality over the next parliamentary term, year, next five years to get us excited, daunted, or at least knowledgeable about what is going to be going on for women. But let's start off, as always, with the most difficult question. Tell us something good that's happened. Who wants to kick me off? Kick me off? Don't kick me off.

[00:04:52.740] - Amanda Aitken

I'll go first, seeing as how I thought of it last minute. I love when it gets to autumn. And the past week I feel like Glasgow has really just lent into being extremely cold. And yesterday morning I went for a cycle and it was like four degrees outside. It was so sunny and just cold and I was like, oh, this is the best. I'm so ready for this weather, but also just nice to wear knitwear. I've missed layers, I've missed having layers on, you know. So I think my good thing is that I'm wearing a jumper again.

[00:05:25.300] - Alys Mumford

I am, yeah I was looking you do look nice and cosy in your jumper. We've got video on for the first time in this podcast which is exciting. I am sitting here in a T shirt, so I'm not quite feeling the woolens yet, but soon.

[00:05:36.800] - Jill Wood

I've got a hot water bottle.

[00:05:37.250] - Eilidh Dickson

I just wear woolens year round.

[00:05:39.780] - Alys Mumford

Yeah that's true, you're just wooly and warm.

[00:05:43.680] - Eilidh Dickson

So I think it's been a really difficult week to be a woman and to be a feminist woman. And so I really struggled with this one this week. But I'm going to pick something that's the tiniest little thing that just makes me smile every day. Which is that my cat who's called Ginsburg, has taken to sleeping - much like Amanda she's here for the cosy weather - and she's taken to sleeping on a woollen blanket every single day, wrapping herself in the blanket - a very expensive fancy blanket, I have to say, for a cat bed. And she takes her little toy rabbit to bed with her as well. So every day when I walk past, she is snuggled up with her little bunny rabbit, which is immaculate and not remotely destroyed by cat. So it's very, very sweet and just makes me smile every single day.

[00:06:27.170] - Alys Mumford

Are we able to put a photo of it in the show notes?

[00:06:30.070] - Eilidh Dickson

I will share a photo for the shownotes.

[00:06:31.480] - Alys Mumford

Lovely, thank you very much. Jill?

[00:06:37.920] - Jill Wood

My thing, I think, is I went to the doctor yesterday and I had a really good chat with the doctor who at the end of the appointment said, "I have to say that the way that medical profession that treats women is all terrible". And then we had a brilliant chat about it, which ended up with her saying: "I apologise for the medical establishment"

[00:06:59.260] - Alys Mumford

WOW

[00:06:59.260] - Jill Wood

So we ended up talking about when talking about, you know, women's conditions, not being listened to and you know pain, taking longer to prescribe and all this kind of thing. It was so nice and such a change from the usual kind of situation.

[00:07:12.080] - Alys Mumford

Nice. You managed to snatch a good thing from a bad thing there, which I'm happy about. I thought it was just going to be women's health is ignored. But one doctor knows is not so that's good

[00:07:26.840] - Jill Wood

I told her that she did not need to apologise on behalf of the medical establishment. but it was just really nice to have a doctor saying that too often people just sort of write it off as being women of being exhausted mums and things like that, which is obviously not exactly what you want to hear. And in sharp contrast to a recent appointment I had where a doctor mansplained periods to me.

[00:07:54.060] - all

Oh God

[00:07:54.060] - Jill Wood

Like actually. And then told me that PMT doesn't exist.

[00:07:59.720] - Eilidh Dickson

Wow

[00:08:01.940] - Jill Wood

"One husband could say the same thing to a girl and she wouldn't say anything and then a different husband could say the same thing and that girl would bite his head off". Like actually. So there's no basis.

[00:08:18.140] - Alys Mumford

Well, I've learned something today. I'm glad these people are here to tell us.

[00:08:27.200] - Eilidh Dickson

I thought you were going to say you were glad to hear there was no such thing as PMT.

[00:08:32.380] - Alys Mumford

That's what I mean! Like it's clearly all been in my head for the last 30 years. not 30 years. 20 years of my life. Sorry, Jill you managed to turn a bad thing into a good thing, but now we've just turned that good thing into a bad thing because we've just talked about the terrible medical establishment. Sorry. We'll talk about women's health in more depth in another podcast. My good thing this week is - I was also going to do a cat-related related one, but I won't because Eilidh's sewn up the cat market.

[00:09:00.660] - Eilidh Dickson

Sorry

[00:09:01.320] - Alys Mumford

No not at all! I just got, the postie just came, which is always good but got two very exciting things. One was that I ordered - in a fit of "I'm going to change my house and that will make the world a better place" - a sample of bright pink flamingo wallpaper. So that's pretty exciting. Also never wallpapered - fun. But also in that delivery. Wait - not from the same place. Postie also delivered Eve Livingston's new book Make Bosses Pay all about unions and women and organising. So that's very exciting. So that's going to be my new reading that was my good thing: post, wallpaper and feminist writing.

[00:09:42.740] - Amanda Aitken

What a day

[00:09:43.690] - Alys Mumford

What a day. So let's get into the meat of the podcast. We're talking about the Scottish Parliament. What can we expect to see over the next five years that's of particular interest of women? Who wants to kick off on this? Eilidh.

[00:10:00.280] - Eilidh Dickson

Well, we recently had the Programme for Government, which is the document and the statement that the First Minister makes at the start of September after the recess every year and it sets out the Scottish Government's planned legislative and policy programme for the coming year. This year the Programme for Government is obviously the first one since the SNP/Green Cooperation Agreement was set out in July, and it's the first one since the elections back in May. So we actually had relatively few surprises. Most of the announcements actually, we'd already discussed probably on this podcast and in the election work that Engender did back in the spring taking forward manifesto commitments and also some of the policy commitments that were set in the SNP/Green Memorandum of Agreement. It is important, though, that we look at the Programme for Government and also bear in mind that Scottish Government doesn't have full say over the legislative output of the Parliament. Opposition parties can use, and do use, a number of different tools to push forward their perspective and their own priorities, including bringing forward legislative amendments, including their own opposition debates and negotiations and cooperation between parties are really common. The committees are also really influential and have had huge success in pushing things up the agenda and can also bring forward their own bills. And we have also seen private members bills in the previous parliaments, for example, Monica Lennon's period products bill that was introduced last session and ultimately convinced the Scottish Government to support that bill and introduce free period product provision in Scotland.

[00:11:42.490] - Alys Mumford

(yay!)

[00:11:43.420] - Eilidh Dickson

Traditionally parties have also used budget negotiations when I talked before about cooperation the

previous budget period has been quite a good time for a bit of that horse horse-trading trading that goes on between the parties and the Scottish Parliament where they can use their support for the budget to try and advocate for things they would like to see. I think we're unlikely to see that used in this as long as the SNP co operation agreement with the Greens is standing. But the budget bill has to be passed every year and traditionally that's been a good opportunity for us to see what individual parties are prioritising and what is their big ask of the Government in a trade off for their support for the budget. So the budget is going to be - we're expecting the budget to be published on the 9 December this year. Committees are currently undertaking their pre-budget scrutiny, which is when they look at, they do a call for evidence, Engender has responded to that and look at some of the big issues that are affecting different groups or things that they would like to see related to their subject matter. And they produce a report probably around October/November time which is supposed to influence the Scottish Government's development of the budget and the budget often tells us quite a lot about the Programme for Government. Actually, we often have to read the two together. So as an example, one thing I think the 3rd sector is going to be looking out for in quite some detail is what the Scottish Government does about the commitment it made in the Programme for Government to set out a route to doubling the Scottish child payment to 20 pounds per week per child as quickly as possible during the Parliament. And they also talked about introducing bridging payments. The 3rd sector, including Engender, has been involved in quite a big campaign over the summer to try and push that doubling of the Scottish Child Payment forward to encourage the Scottish Government to do that as quickly as possible. So I think the budget will be kind of the first time we really see to what extent the Scottish Government's really looking to invest in delivering that commitment as quickly as it possibly can.

[00:13:43.300] - Alys Mumford

For sure, yeah, we always sort of talk about the need to follow the money and commitment. Yeah, commitments made verbally can be all well and good, but if there's no sort of money behind it, we're not sure how much progress can be made. So we will be keeping an eye on that, as I'm sure will the Scottish Women's Budget Group. So looking at the Programme for Government for the stuff they say they want to do, as always, Engender produced a gender edit, which means we pull out of the bits of the programme of government that relate to women's equality or women's lives. Jill, what was in the Programme for Government that was of particular interest to women?

[00:14:18.000] - Jill Wood

Well, there's a big, sort of, header on the care economy and obviously that's something we talk about all the time and the need for it. But I was just thinking there when you spoke about the need to follow the money, it's really unclear, like, what they're actually going to do, specifically. There's bits and pieces here and there. But there's a commitment to developing a national care service which is welcome, but there's a lot of concern amongst care organisations and obviously women's organisations, disabled people's organisations about we can't wait five years for a new care service to be up and running and operationalized and especially at the moment when things are in transition, recovery is just kicking off. So unpaid carers, for example, there's as furlough schemes come to an end, they can't go back to work yet to the same degree of people who aren't in higher risk situations. What are they meant to do now? So we're hoping and calling for support for unpaid carers to tide them over and immediate investment in social care as well. I mean, it's really well established that the system's on its knees, but we haven't seen any investment in social care jobs. There's a huge staffing crisis, this is why it's all following on unpaid carers and women. So that's a huge thing. And at the moment, I would have to say the care economy side of things does feel like rhetoric. So the Covid recovery strategy is also going to be big one. Eilidh do you want to mention anything on that?

[00:15:45.450] - Eilidh Dickson

The Programme for Government does include a commitment to introduce a Covid recovery bill, which it describes as about supporting recovery across public health, public services and the justice system, building resilience against future public health threats and maintaining tangible benefits of modernization and practices adopted during the pandemic. So a kind of 'lessons learned' and cementing what they see as some of the positives, but also reflecting some of the some of the significant challenges and exacerbating inequalities that we've seen as a result of the way in which services have adapted Covid-19. I don't think we've had detail on that bill, but I think obviously that will

be quite a big cross-cutting commitment, and the Programme for Government doesn't really say which elements of service adaptation it's looking to kind of keep or prioritise or build-on beyond, I think some of the ways in which we've moved to digitalization of the NHS and more kind of remote tele-working and tele-medical appointments, which have, I think generally been accepted as having had positives and negatives. Being able to access a service remotely is really, really positive for people in remote communities, women with childcare or care responsibilities at home that mean they can't travel to appointments or women for whom transport, public transport is inadequate or inaccessible to get them there on time for an appointment. But obviously there is a huge risk of digital exclusion, particularly for older women and women living in poverty. So I think the devil will be in the detail a little bit when it comes to kind of what the lessons learned elements of the pandemic will be. We also know that there's going to be a public inquiry into Covid-19, which was announced, I think back in August actually, and the the Scottish Government has been consulting on the principles and aims for that inquiry. We expect it to be set up next year, but the consultation on the principles named has been really, really short. So a public call for views only lasted one week, so it's been really challenging to be definitive about the extent to which that inquiry will focus on the issues that we really needed to focus on and the extent to which it will take a gender perspective to looking at the ways in which women's inequality has been exacerbated by the pandemic.

[00:18:03.300] - Alys Mumford

Great, thank you. That is wild, but I mean people have got loads of free time at the minute so, you know, a really quick consultation...So just briefly we talked about Covid and the care economy there. Are there any other big bits of legislation, big topic areas that we saw in the Programme for Government or that we didn't see and wanted to?

[00:18:25.340] - Jill Wood

I'll let Eilidh speak about human rights incorporation in a minute that's her wheelhouse but it's also worth mentioning a commitment to expand child care for one and two year olds. Most local authorities are now delivering 30 hours a week for three and four year olds, and they're looking to set out routes towards that for this Parliament, which is obviously extremely welcome. We do need to see how that can be expanded to wrap-around care, that would enable it have an impact on women's labour market inequality and operational segregation, gender pay, all that sort of stuff. There's also things in there about looking at minimum income guarantee which we're involved in and looking forward to being developed and interesting and welcome pilots on the four day working week, which has obvious benefits as well for women who are juggling typically more care work and other commitments than men. And a final thing I'd like to mention which is definitely on the sort of nerdy side, but there's a commitment to an equality and human rights mainstreaming strategy. I go on about mainstreaming all the time because it's absolutely vital, if they'd just done some of this stuff. It's frustrating sitting in these meetings and thinking "if you just applied your legal obligation to properly equality impact assessed this in the first place, we wouldn't be here in this meeting retrospectively telling you it doesn't have any equality in it!" So equality and human rights mainstreaming strategy is in development, and that is certainly a positive to see the Scottish Government invested in something that's obviously integral.

[00:20:14.920] - Alys Mumford

Great. Eilidh, human rights were mentioned there.

[00:20:18.590] - Eilidh Dickson

Yeah.

[00:20:19.200] - Alys Mumford

You like them.

[00:20:20.080] - Eilidh Dickson

I do. [laughter] So we obviously are extremely pleased to see that the commitment the Scottish Government made following the publication of the National Task Force and Human Rights Leadership's work on incorporation, including incorporation of CEDAW have been set out in the Programme for Government, so we've seen that restated in the Programme for Government, which is

really, really pleased to see which is really, really welcome and really, really exciting. We won't be expecting a bill this year, but we do know that action is under way to develop that bill. There has been a bill advisory board or bill advisory group that Engender has been invited to sit on to support the development of the bill. So we are looking forward to getting really into the technical detail of how incorporation can work and how we can strengthen women's equality and rights within the framework beyond CEDAW, including CEDAW, but beyond CEDAW, so that's really exciting. And the programme for Government does say that there will be a consultation on that this year, so I would expect that to be the sort of first half of 2022.

[00:21:25.180] - Eilidh Dickson

Other things I could mention were the sort of scale of commitments on women's health, which reflects quite a dominant feature of the SNP's manifesto. Again, something we're really pleased to see. The Women's Health Plan was published over the summer, which Engender was involved in as well. And we very much see that health plan as the first step in a really wide-ranging ambition to improve women's health, the delivery of women's healthcare for women as - coming back to Jill's good thing at the start of the podcast - so that will be really exciting to see. And so in terms of the bills that we're expecting, I've mentioned the Covid Recovery bill. We are also being told that the care, National Care Service bill will be forthcoming in this Parliament, which is really quick turnaround given that the consultation is going on at the moment. And we're also expecting the bill on Gender Recognition Act reform as well.

[00:22:17.500] - Amanda Aitken

So many things.

[00:22:18.730] - Eilidh Dickson

So many things.

[00:22:20.660] - Amanda Aitken

And that's really interesting as well of these things, because obviously we recorded a podcast back in May after the Scottish Parliament elections looking at who had been elected and yeah, who was likely to form the Scottish Government. But obviously since then we've had summer recess and we've seen some changes with a cooperation agreement being formed between the SNP and the Scottish Green Party. And could you just maybe explain to listeners what that means, what does this mean?

[00:22:45.900] - Eilidh Dickson

Sure. So a cooperation agreement is not, there's not really a defined meaning of what a cooperation agreement is. It's really a kind of contract between the two parties, and in this case it doesn't amount to a full coalition between the SNP and the Greens, but it is an agreement that the Green members in Scottish Parliament will support the Scottish Government on agreed shared agenda, which is subject to some exclusions. Of note for Engender is some of the exclusions around the principles related to the economy and inclusive growth, laws governing the selling of sex, and also some of the detail on international affairs might be relevant for us, but which all of those are included on a list of pre agreed matters that the parties agree to differ on. And in return for that support two Green, MSPs have been appointed as junior ministers, the party co leaders Patrick Harvie and Lorna Slater. Those ministers are junior ministers in the government that they have also been invited to join the Cabinet for meetings twice a year, so they will have access to the sort of really high level strategic direction of the Scottish Government, which is a really different model for the ways in which Greens and the SNP have worked together before. As I mentioned, I think before, back in July, the two parties set out a Shared Policy Programme document which has largely now been replicated in the Programme for Government. So there wasn't that much surprise between the two, but the kind of shared outputs that are described in that document include a referendum on independence, significantly increasing the level of Scottish child payment and implementing a national system of rent controls, enhancing tenant rights, which will be significantly beneficial for women who are much more likely than men to rent as opposed to own their own property and the delivery of over 100,000 more affordable homes. In addition to that, there's a huge number of commitments relating to climate change and green jobs and a just transition. So it's quite a comprehensive package of long term objectives that the two parties are kind of agreeing to work towards.

[00:24:46.860] - Amanda Aitken

You mentioned independence there. So I just want to come back to that again because obviously there's been a lot of media and online commentary around what this deal might look like around independence coming forward again with a future proposal for another independence referendum. So could you maybe just expand a wee bit on that, on the Programme for Government and what that means as well.

[00:25:13.600] - Jill Wood

There's been conversation about waiting until a time that it's basically possible to call a referendum in terms of Covid and the recovery from the pandemic. So the commitment is to hold a referendum within the lifetime of this Parliament. Nicola Sturgeon has said that she's looking to do it by the end of 2023, kind of depending on how things play out with recovery and the ongoing crisis. Obviously that's the intention and it will have to go through Parliament as well. So Parliament will have to agree the process. From our point of view, as with previous constitutional debates including the referendum in 2014 and then around Brexit, we just want to make sure that women are involved in discussions and they have adequate access to participatory politics. All these kind of things that we've talked about lots of times before, and I'll probably come and to talk about in terms of local elections later in the podcast. And there's also a debate around what constitutional arrangements mean for women's equality so that people know that and they're able to exercise their vote on that basis, understanding what the implications could be. So at the moment, reserved to the UK Government are really critical issues around employment. There's currently a bunch of issues related to women's employment and also around equalities law, which the Scottish Government doesn't have the power to exercise, including around, for example, quotas to set gender quotas for the Scottish Parliament or a range of issues around addressing women's labour market inequality. So it's important to bring those kind of equality issues into the fore when we're having these constitutional debates.

[00:27:03.640] - Alys Mumford

Yeah, 100% I think we definitely saw that with Brexit, certainly in terms of what was being discussed in the big policy forums and on the news was often, I mean, fish spring to mind, which are important, but yeah, the sort of issues we were talking about were not often high up on people's radars, I'd say, in terms of the impact on some of these things. So yeah, obviously we will be keeping folk updated as and when there's any more information about a potential independence referendum, but good to flag that that might be another thing that might dominate over the next five years. So looking at the work that Engender is doing over the same period, are there any particular bits of policy work that our policy team are excited about or at least have, know are going to be coming up.

[00:27:58.600] - Eilidh Dickson

Well I can start. So I think the first thing for us is that our Gender Matters Roadmap and our manifesto that we published in the spring for the 2021 elections are probably still the best statement of the broad ambitions and the areas that we're working within. So care and economic recovery and the economic value of care, women's health and reproductive rights, poverty and Social Security will continue to be a focus for us, women's use of public space. We are also doing work around innovative approaches to misogyny and sexual harassment in the workplace, human rights incorporation I have already mentioned, but that will be a significant part of our work for the next year, at least, and probably for much, much longer after that. policy-making. And we will continue to be involved quite closely with all of the conversations that are underway around equality, human rights, mainstreaming, and representation of women and women's equality within policy making processes. More specifically, I suspect I will forget lots of things that we're currently working on, but we continue to be involved in the Misogyny Working Group. We will be looking closely at the plans for implementation of the women's health plan. We obviously want to make sure that women's equality is a central feature of the Covid recovery agenda and the bill that I discussed at the beginning of the podcast as well as the inquiry.

[00:29:21.980] - Alys Mumford

Jill, give us, give us some geekery.



[00:29:31.180] - Jill Wood

I will [laughter]. So. Sorry the rain is quite heavy again, did you mention the consultation on PSED, the public sector equality duty.

[00:29:41.400] - Eilidh Dickson

No. I mentioned mainstreaming, but I didn't mention PSED.

[00:29:44.460] - Jill Wood

So that's ongoing at the moment, Scottish Government is due to publish a public consultation soon. So we will be recommending a host of stuff around a set of reformed regulations including statutory gender budget analysis, a lot of stuff around data and the improvement of..

[00:30:06.500] - Alys Mumford

Data Klaxon!

[00:30:06.500] - Jill Wood

Data Klaxon. Gender-sensitive, sex-disaggregated intersectional data both in terms of gathering that and using that and vast improvements to the way that not equality impact assessments themselves, but the way that they are used because there's no accountability or leadership around these kind of assessments at the moment. So that's one that really ticks the geekery box there Alys.

[00:30:36.860] - Alys Mumford

Yeah, really good thank you.

[00:30:38.490] - Amanda Aitken

And of course. You know, we're going to have local authority elections next year as well, which will be another thing for us to focus on. [laughter]

[00:30:46.560] - Alys Mumford

Yeah, for sure we cannot get enough of elections up here. Jill, give us a 30 seconds on why women should care about local Council elections.

[00:30:55.080] - Jill Wood

Loads of decisions affect women are taken at the local level around care. I'm thinking about provision of services as well. You know, the closure of local libraries for example, has a disproportionate impact on women, other leisure facilities on paid carers, women undertaking child care, pregnant women, access to toilets and infrastructure.

[00:31:18.570] - Alys Mumford

We know that obviously women's representation in local councils is shockingly bad about 29%. We will of course, be monitoring to see if that improves any, but there are still wards and in fact an entire Council with no women's representation on them in Scotland. So it's a low bar, but hopefully we'll see a bit of increase in the women actually being able to have some power in those areas that Jill mentioned there. So loads going on. Hopefully listeners are excited about all the different ways they can geek out about women's equality legislation and action over the sort of next five years. And of course, we'll be keeping you updated on everything we are doing in that and link to all the documents that will mentioned there in the show notes. To sort of put this in context because it can be very easy to get mired down in the sort of detailed and legislative timetables and things. But let's end with some aspiration. So when we record an episode of On the Engender in 2026 (and that's the aspirational part) and I ask "what's been the biggest change we've seen for women in Scotland over the past five years", what will your answers be, Eilidh and Jill? And Amanda, why not.

[00:32:29.020] - Eilidh Dickson

Well, it would be very remiss of me not to say the Human Rights Act, the forthcoming Human Rights Act and the incorporation of CEDAW. I think that has the potential to really actually deliver some transformative change to the way public services consider women's equality and human rights in the delivery of their services and increase the accountability for when human, women's human rights are

denied by public authorities. We have always described a vision where women can go to their local court and cite CEDAW as a way of claiming their rights. And obviously there are barriers to justice that we could go into. But I really think that done well, resourced well, a fully participatory process which involves all women and can really change the way in which public services think about human rights and women's equality.

[00:33:25.740] - Alys Mumford  
Amazing. Jill how about you, can you beat that?

[00:33:27.780] - Jill Wood  
I'm not sure. That's, that's quite high bar. I'm thinking about the potential of PSED reform. Just some.

[00:33:36.830] - Alys Mumford  
Of course you are. Are you ever thinking about anything else?

[00:33:44.180] - Jill Wood  
...yes. [laughter]. But just thinking about yeah that sort of systemic transformational potential. If a statutory requirement to do gender budget analysis meant that different public bodies actually did a proper gender analysis and did follow gender budgetary processes throughout the year, not just retrospectively on the budget, then that should in theory really lead to money being spent on different groups of women and girls but also on gender equality objectives And some of the other tools within the PSED that I mentioned. So if that reform is done well, we could say could see real change.

[00:34:29.820] - Alys Mumford  
Amazing. Amanda, I sneakily tagged in that question?

[00:34:34.520] - Amanda Aitken  
You have! You have put me on the spot. I think perhaps just because a lot of what you know, we've - in terms of the podcast and stuff- the recordings we've been doing of late, and even in this one today, I think I would just like to see a huge change in how care is like read and understood within the Parliament. I would like to think by 2026 that will be in a much better place in terms of how we discuss it in relation to the economy, because it's such a, you know it's been a crisis point for so long already. Yeah. I feel hopeful right now that there will be some positive change in what we've discussed through this episode, but also...No, I'm hopeful. I'm going to stay here. How about you Alys?

[00:35:18.920] - Alys Mumford  
Yeah. For my part, I don't know exactly what I want to see, but I was really pleased to see that No Recourse to Public Funds was mentioned in the Programme for Government in again, a very sort of vague way, and that's partly because it's tied up with constitutional questions and competency questions and things. But I think it's been something that people have been pushing to be on the agenda for a really long time, looking at destitution and no recourse to public funds and the inherent racism within these, those policies and how they impact on particular groups of women. So really encouraged to see that in there. And I hope will hope that in five years time we've got rid of it, basically, however, that might happen. So. Yeah, so tune in in 2026 to find out the answers to all these predictions.

[00:36:08.960] - Amanda Aitken  
So leaving on a positive note, we're going to now come to our section that we wrap the podcast up with some recommendations from everyone for listeners. It can just be something you're watching, it can be a book, can be a meme, anything! Can be more about the cats...

[00:36:25.550] - Alys Mumford  
Mine is about cats, so I'm going to dive right in there!

[00:36:28.530] - Amanda Aitken  
Ok Alys you go first.

[00:36:32.490] - Alys Mumford

This is something Eilidh shared on our work Slack. It's Judith Butler explained with cats, so we will put a link to that in the shownotes. Very good.

[00:36:39.160] - Amanda Aitken

Very good, very good. What about you Eilidh?

[00:36:43.120] - Eilidh Dickson

Keeping the theme of my input today as being quite light and fluffy, I'm going to recommend a podcast, which I'm not sure if we mentioned on this podcast before, which is the Sentimental Garbage podcast by Caroline O'Donoghue, which is where Caroline invites a guest on to talk primarily about literature, but also the current series goes much broader into kind of cultural wider cultural phenomenon such as Mama Mia, Bridget Jones, Sex and the City, there was a mini series on Sex and the City, but basically she looks at culture that has been denigrated because it is associated with women, described as 'chick lit' or described as fluffy or inconsequential and really just get into the joy of why, why we love characters like Bridget Jones and what they say about us and women's concerns. So I really, really recommend it as something that's just a joy to indulge in and no longer describe these things as guilty pleasure.

[00:37:41.460] - Amanda Aitken

Amazing. That sounds great. Yeah Jill what about you?

[00:37:45.080] - Jill Wood

I'm just going to mention a book I finished reading: The Vanishing Half, don't know if anyone's...Brit Bennett. So really enjoyable book, entertaining, explores a lot of themes around gender and race and gender identity.

[00:38:02.360] - Amanda Aitken

My recommendation is so Glasgow's Feminist Exchange Network is doing like a week of workshops and discussions at the CCA at the beginning of November kind of to align with with Cop 26 and yeah, it's going to be a week of events discussing feminism and economics with climate activism. And yeah, it's going to be performances and films and discussions, round tables, but that's all going to be happening at CCA. So you should have a we we look out for that.

[00:38:32.120]

Awesome, what a good bunch of recs.

[00:38:37.840] - Amanda Aitken

Do you want to end the...say good bye, Alys?

[00:38:43.820] - Speaker 2

[laughter] It's goodbye for me, and it's goodbye from....Yes. Thanks for listening, dear listeners. I hope you found that useful to know what's coming up for Engender for the Scottish Parliament and for you all. Thank you to Eilidh and Jill for joining us. I hope the gale ends soon, Jill, and thank you to you Amanda Aitken, my wonderful co-host. Stay safe everyone. bye!

[00:39:16.950] - Speaker 1

Engender was hosted by Alys Mumford and produced by myself Amanda Aitken on behalf of Engender. The music feature throughout was written and performed by Bossy Love. You can follow us on socials @EngenderScott and to find out more about the work of Engender. Head to our website Engender.scot and also be sure to click subscribe to this podcast so you never miss an episode.