



## Scenarios for Scotland

As Scotland approached the turn of the century, it also faced the prospect of a Scottish Parliament and a measure of autonomy. What sort of Scotland would be the result of these changes?

### The background: whither Scotland?

A group of sponsors, including the Scottish Executive, Scottish Enterprise, Aegon, Amarada Hess, Shell, Diageo and ICL, formed a consortium to undertake a study on Scotland in 2015. Specifically, the study was intended to:

- Create two or three post-devolution scenarios for Scotland.
- Illuminate the longer-term patterns of political, economic, socio-demographic, technological and cultural change.
- Assist sponsor organisations to identify and develop new policy options which emerged from the process.
- Advise sponsor organisations on the process, from scenario building to strategy development.
- Provide a vehicle for deepening the understanding of the complex issues involved in Scotland's future.
- Bring dissident or unconventional thinking into the scenario process.

### SAMI's role: enabling the vision

SAMI, together with St Andrews University and Strathclyde University, managed the project on behalf of the sponsors. SAMI organised the training of volunteers from the stakeholders, ran focus groups and analysed the results, Strathclyde modelled the results using their Decision Support tool, while St Andrews University took responsibility for carrying the results into the Scottish political arena. Over 200 interviews and 50 focus groups contributed to the scenarios.

The research was an intensive, 18-month process, including many thoughtful and stimulating meetings of groups drawn from every walk of Scottish life. One learning point was the difficulty of providing an effective stimulus for people to think about a future which could be different, and the importance of the SAMI 7 Questions™ in achieving this.

### The results: creating contrasting stories

The report detailing the process is organised around two scenarios.



The first is ***The High Road***, which represents the best future for Scotland. It comes about if everything goes well, if decision-makers make the right decisions, if there is creativity, innovation and learning, and if there is enlightenment. The pathway could be tricky in parts and Scotland could trip up. The story points out these dangers. In all, it is broadly encouraging and positive.

***The Low Road*** shows a disappointing picture of the future for Scotland. It has the hallmarks of a nervous culture, political uncertainty and economic decline. It comes about if the nation's decision-makers and people are lethargic. The pathway could even go downhill and lead to disaster, leaving the nation in deep despair 15 years hence.

As the report outlining the scenarios concludes, "Our High Road scenario is a challenge, but it can be reached over the next 15 years....The choice for the Scottish nation is a difficult one but there is little time for protracted debate. We hope that our own scenarios will at least focus leaders from every part of Scottish life on the way ahead. An appreciation of our future should stimulate us into action."

The scenarios have been absorbed into Scottish thinking. For instance, in appraising policy options Professor Peter McKiernan of St Andrews University frequently hears the expression "that's a low road strategy, what about the high road?" And Scottish Enterprise has used the scenario thinking as it has refocused its efforts to invigorate the Scottish economy, towards developing entrepreneurship

A fuller report containing the final output of the scenario process is available on the SAMI web site, [www.samiconsulting.co.uk](http://www.samiconsulting.co.uk).