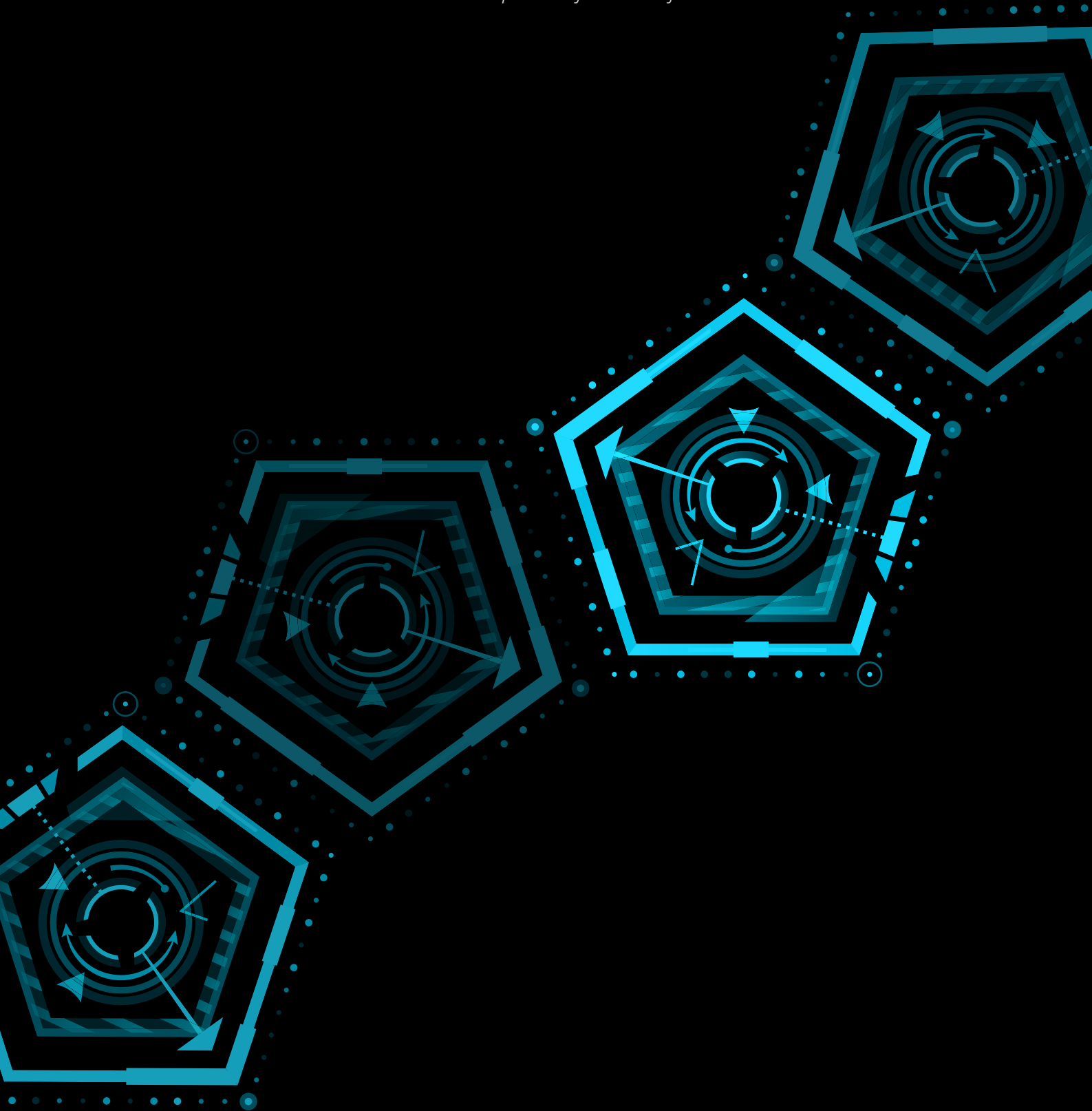


Charting the horizon:

A 2033 perspective on the impact of the skills emphasis of 2023 on Scottish Education and Lifelong Learning, the emergence of the Tertiary Sector, and the ongoing influence of the STEAM Agenda – Navigating the current landscape and future trajectories.



Department of
Education &
Innovation



Scottish Government
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Scotland Futures
Forum 2045



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In 2027, following a newly elected Scottish government and on the back of a plethora of reports produced in 2022/2023 urging for Education reform in Scotland (which was subsequently halted by the Cabinet Secretary for Education at the time), Head of the Department for Education and Innovation (est.2025) Bea McLean recruited a cohort of education practitioners from across the various pockets of formal and informal education sectors. Chosen for their gumption, futures thinking, disruptive tendencies and their passion to reform education for the benefit of Scotland (not for the policy makers), their mission was to develop a new framework for Scottish education with 'learning throughout life powered by STEAM' as the stimulus, and establish hubs of Lifelong Learning (LLL) across Scotland. In 2030 the first cohort of students arrived here at Dynamic Earth in Edinburgh (LLL hub for Edinburgh and the Lothians) to embark on the maiden voyage of the new 'Challenger Curriculum'. Named after the HMS Challenger, the curriculum was designed to continue the legacy of it's namesake; to fully explore the potential of uncharted waters (Tertiary education) and in doing so provide participants with learning experiences that enabled them to fully explore *their* potential.

Today, in 2033, with accounts from the renegade crew, their captain and the participants, we take this opportunity to look at what stoked the fire in the belly of this mighty vessel, the route thus far and look ahead to what's potentially on the horizon.

Ten years ago, a storm was brewing...

2023

'Turbulent waters'

- Education reform paused for further consultation, after the publications of reports indicating that radical reform of awarding bodies and qualifications was required.

2024

- Proposal for New awarding body and Scottish Diploma of Achievement proposal was rejected by education sector.
- Quality framework for Tertiary education proposed by QAA, Education Scotland and Colleges Scotland.
- Through consultation and National discussion 'Curriculum for Excellence' deemed inappropriate, inflexible and unresponsive to the needs of the newly proposed Tertiary framework.

2025

- UK General election; new coalition party created.
- Scottish Education reform bill restarted after changes to elected government, Tertiary model features high on the agenda.
- Education Scotland closes ahead of the impending Scottish Government elections. Department of Education and Innovation (DofEI) created.

2026

- Scottish Government election resulting in a coalition government, SNP and Labour.
- Newly elected cabinet secretary for Education. Education reform bill is passed.
- DofEI propose STEAM is highlighted as core to new curriculum for Tertiary and Lifelong Learning framework.

2027

'Building Challenger'

- DofEI recruits group of specialists to develop new hubs for the Lifelong Learning and Tertiary sector, with decision taken to develop pilot at Dynamic Earth, Edinburgh.
- 'Challenger Curriculum' development begins consultation.
- Awarding body undergoes second overhaul in 4 years, merging with Skills Development Scotland to become SFEI (Scottish Framework for Education and Innovation).

2028

- Development of ‘Challenger curriculum’ progresses to building central spine integrating formal and informal education structures with employers and community settings.

2029

- Test drive of ‘Challenger’ core electives with members from employers, community groups and education organisations.

2030

‘The Maiden Voyage’

- UK General election.
- Scottish Government election; coalition remains. New Secretary for Education.
- First cohort of participants enroll and begin ‘Challenger’.

2031

- DofEI interim review indicates that ‘Challenger’ has had a positive impact for those onboard, however concerns raised regarding proposed matrix of measurements connected to funding model.

2032

- Informed by DofEI review, SFEI propose pilot for a new funding model that provides Lifelong learning opportunities through ‘Challenger’ for 16-90 year olds.
- Survey of participants reveals that ‘value’ of learning has increased along with Mental Health and Well-being.
- Expansion of curriculum to include further representation from vocational industries that are at risk of being left behind.
- Additional hubs for Lifelong Learning are considered across Scotland, attracting interest from International partners in ‘Challenger’.

2033

Docking here, let’s hear from those onboard.



How did they steer through turbulent seas?
Why 'Challenger'?
What fed into the construction and build?
What has it been like onboard?

Hearing from the people who have been part of this adventure was key to this report. Their interviews have been included, so that you the reader can listen to their stories and hear from those who built, captained, crewed and have been on the maiden voyage of 'Challenger'.



[Click or scan to listen to an excerpt from interviews recorded at The Challenger Symposium \(2033\).](#)

Turbulent Waters

Bea McLean (Head of Department of Education and Innovation)

Building 'Challenger'

Fin Jefferies (Challenger programme director and practitioner)

The Maiden Voyage

Lesley Campbell (Challenger, 2030-2033)

Calum Forsyth (Butcher)





If we chart the journey of ‘Challenger’ against the OECD Learning compass 2030 (see figure 1), at several points there are strong co-relations. Listening to Lesley’s story, it’s apparent that the curriculum offers a rich and valuable learning experience whereby participants are co-agents along with employer partners. A reconciliation of the tensions between education and ‘the real world’ has begun through a structure that fosters a culture of lifelong learning at it’s core. The commoditisation of skills has lessened, however the DofEI and Scottish Government needs to continue to work towards a funding model that values experience, capacities and capabilities, and process. With the World Economic Skills Forum coming aboard along with OECD and UNESCO, new global partnerships are possible; could this add different fuel to the fire?



Click image to view video by OECD
 (Figure 1: OECD Learning Compass, OECD 2020)

On Scotland’s shores the Scottish Association for Marine Science (Oban) is set to become the LLL hub for Highlands and Islands (West), sites in Aberdeen and Perth are following closely behind. With these developments proposals for satellite hubs have been put forward especially for the benefit of rural communities.

‘Challenger’ has definitely made waves in the cultures of Scottish Tertiary Education and the motions have created a shift in the pedagogical core that has been clung onto for decades.

Is a liberation of learning more visible on the horizon than in 2023?
 Let’s see where the good ship ‘Challenger’ heads next!

“We can’t direct the wind but we can adjust the sails” - Thomas S. Monson

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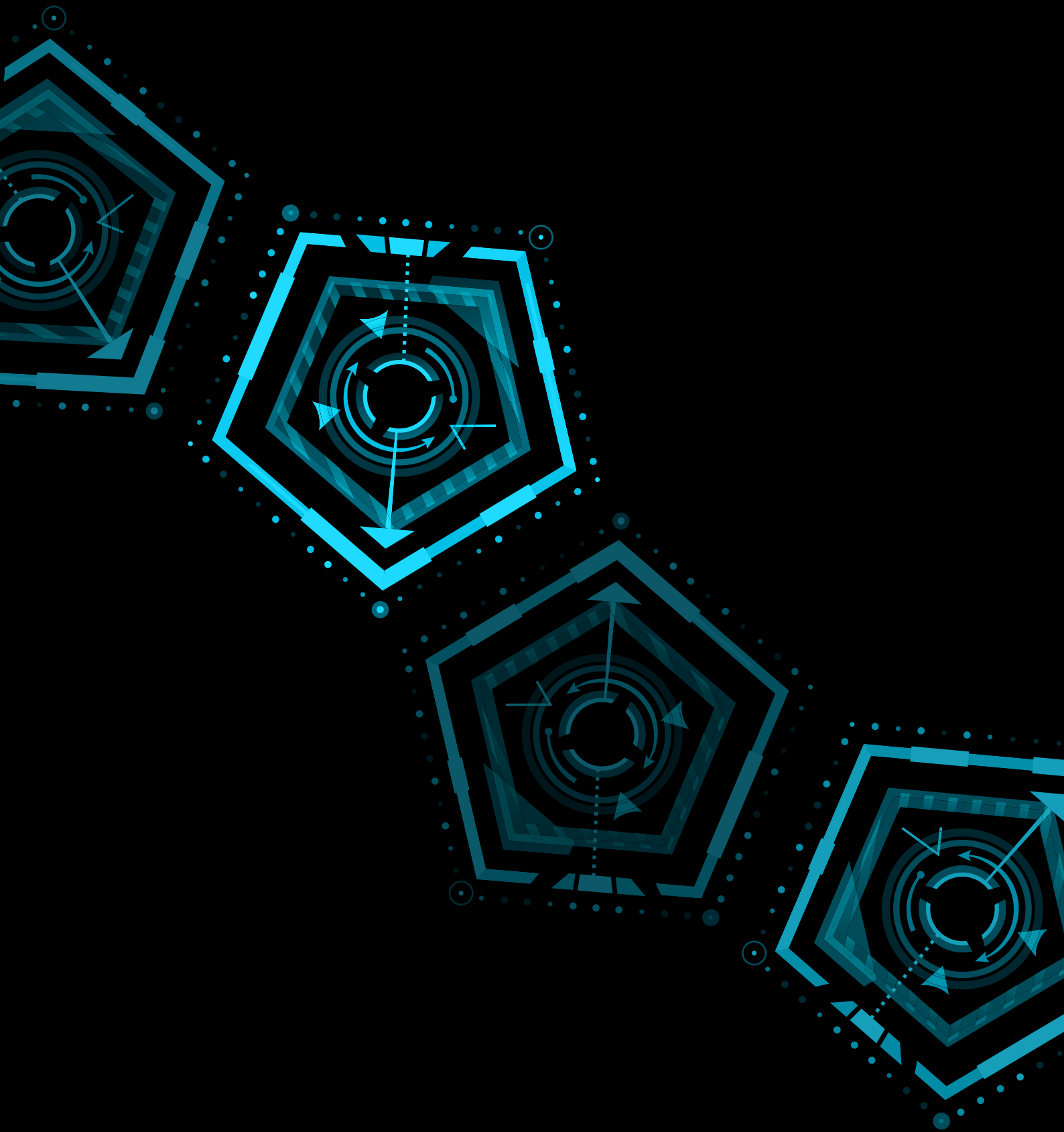
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