

Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee
Tuesday 16 December 2025
38th Meeting, 2025 (Session 6)

Evidence session on the draft Climate Change Plan: note by the Clerk

Introduction

1. The Climate Change Plan (CCP) is a strategy document which outlines how the Scottish Government intends to meet carbon emissions reduction targets across all portfolio areas and sectors of the economy. A [draft CCP \(covering the period 2026-40\) was laid on 6 November](#).
2. The Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee will lead a cross-committee effort to scrutinise the draft Plan ending in March 2026, with the Committee's second evidence session at this 16 December meeting.

Legislative background

3. The [Climate Change \(Scotland\) Act 2009](#) is the main Scottish legislation on climate change. It set targets to reduce Scotland's emissions by at least 42% by 2020 and 80% by 2050. These targets are to reduce emissions across all of Scotland, not just in relation to the Scottish Government's activities and assets.
4. The 2009 Act required the Scottish Government to produce a Report on Policies and Proposals (RPP), in effect setting out how it proposed to work towards net zero, in a coordinated way, across all main policy areas. It set out some ground rules about what had to be in the Report and required a draft of it to be laid in the Scottish Parliament. Scotland's [most recent statutory RPP](#) was laid on 28 February 2018, covering the period 2018-2032.¹
5. The [Climate Change \(Emission Reduction Targets\) \(Scotland\) Act 2019](#) amended the 2009 Act. It set a target of net zero by 2045.² It also set interim targets of a 75% drop in emissions by 2030 (from a 1990 baseline) and 90% by 2040. It renamed the RPP as the CCP and elaborated further on its handling and content. In particular, it raised the number of days the draft had to sit in Parliament from 60 to 120 days, to allow more time for scrutiny.
6. In March 2024 the Climate Change Committee (CCC), the advisory body to governments in the UK on climate change, advised in their [2023 Scotland Progress Report](#) that the 2030 target was 'no longer credible'. The Scottish Government accepted this advice and brought forward a Bill, enacted as the [Climate Change \(Emissions Reduction Targets\) \(Scotland\) Act 2024](#), which again

¹ A non-statutory "[Climate Change Plan Update](#)" was laid in December 2020

² "Net zero" is when greenhouse gases being emitted into the atmosphere from human-made processes (e.g. from burning fuels or from agricultural processes) are balanced out by removing the same amount (e.g. by sequestering carbon in trees or peatland or using technology to extract carbon from the air)

made amendments to the 2009 Act. It replaced the interim targets with a system of 5-year carbon budgets. The 2045 net zero target was unaltered.

7. The 2024 Act requires the Scottish Government to propose carbon budgets (by way of Regulations) after considering advice from the CCC. The [CCC advice](#) came on 21 May 2025. It also outlined a "Balanced Pathway" which the CCC model as "an ambitious but credible route to Net Zero for Scotland by 2045".
8. The Scottish Government [laid Regulations](#) setting carbon budget levels in line with the CCC's advice on 19 June. Alongside these (as required by the 2024 Act), it published an "[Indicative Statement](#)", outlining the policies and proposals likely to be in the draft CCP. The Statement confirmed that the Scottish Government would take the CCC's overall advice but would depart from the "Balanced Pathway" advice in a few policy areas.
9. The NZET Committee [reported on the Regulations](#) on 30 September. Following a debate in the chamber, the Parliament approved them on 8 October. The 2024 Act requires the Scottish Government lay a draft CCP within two months of the Regulations coming into force. The draft CCP was laid on 6 November.

What is "carbon budgeting"?

10. Carbon budgeting means setting out the maximum amount in carbon emissions that can be "spent" over a given period as a target. This method had been used in climate change legislation for Wales, Northern Ireland and the UK as a whole for some time, so the 2024 Act brought Scotland into line with the rest of the UK. Scottish carbon budgets cover 5-year periods, as in the rest of the UK.
11. The budgets, expressed as an average percentage reduction in emissions since the 1990 baseline across the 5-year carbon budget period, are:
 - 2026 to 2030 – 57% lower than the 1990 baseline
 - 2031 to 2035 – 69% lower
 - 2036 to 2040 – 80% lower
 - 2041 to 2045 – 94% lower.

Timeline of Parliamentary scrutiny

12. The 120 days that the draft CCP is laid in the Parliament ends on 5 March 2026. No statutory process is laid down for this period but the assumption behind this provision was clearly that the Parliament and its committees would use this time to consider, report on and ultimately debate the draft in the Chamber. This has been the case with all previous draft RPPs / CCPs.
13. Once the 120 days are over, the Scottish Government has a statutory deadline of 90 days before which it must lay the final CCP. However, the Scottish Government has indicated, both in their [Programme for Government 2025-26](#) and in [correspondence with the NZET Committee](#), that they intend to lay the CCP

before the Parliament dissolves for the 2026 election. The last day of Parliamentary business before the election is 26 March.

14. When laying the final Plan, the Scottish Government must also lay a statement setting out what changes, if any, they have made to the Plan in response to any representations made to them, including in committee reports or in their public consultation on the draft. The Scottish Government must also publish a response to any resolutions of the Scottish Parliament and any Scottish Parliament Committee reports within three months of them being passed or published.

Content of the draft CCP

15. Section 35 of the 2009 Act sets out matters that must be included in the CCP. These include:

- The policies and proposals for meeting the carbon budgets during the period of the Plan (2026-2040).
- The contributions (in measurable terms) towards meeting the emissions reduction targets made by both each sector and each group of associated policies.
- An estimate of the costs and benefits associated with the policies set out in the Plan.
- How the [Just Transition](#) principles have been considered in preparing the Plan – the principles are set out in full in [Section 35C of the Act](#).
- An assessment of the progress made in implementing the policies and proposals set out in the most recent previous CCP.

16. The draft CCP itself is relatively short with the majority of the content included in the annexes. [Annexe 2](#) has further detail on the policies and proposals broken down by seven sectors:

- Buildings (Residential and Public)
- Transport
- Waste
- Energy supply
- Business and industrial processes
- Agriculture
- Land use, land use change, and forestry

Two further areas are also considered:

- Nature and biodiversity

- Marine

Cross-Parliament scrutiny

17. The Scottish Parliament's Conveners Group set scrutiny of net zero as a strategic priority for the current session of the Parliament, reflecting the transformational impact of both climate change and net zero across all committee remits.
18. Several Scottish Parliament committees are likely to scrutinise parts of the draft CCP. A [9 October letter](#) from the NZET Committee Convener to all other committee Conveners sets out areas other committees may wish to focus on.

Evidence taken on the draft CCP

Call for views

19. The Committee ran a Call for Views asking respondents what should be in the draft CCP from 27 June – 19 September 2025, with 101 responses received, which are [available on the Committee's webpage](#), alongside theme-based summaries prepared by the Scottish Parliament Information Centre.

Previous meetings

20. The Committee's first evidence session on the draft CCP was on 25 November. The Committee [took evidence from a panel](#) providing a generalist oversight on the draft CCP, considering aspects including financing, governance, monitoring and evaluations.

16 December meeting

21. The 16 December meeting includes two panels. The first will consider key themes and strands from the draft Plan as a whole, including costs, delivery and the extent to which the Plan looks balanced in terms of all of its major asks across policies, stakeholder groups, and society. The Committee will hear from:
 - Lloyd Austin, Policy Advisor, Stop Climate Chaos Scotland
 - Professor James Curran, Member, Climate Emergency Response Group
 - Dr Mark Winskel, Senior Lecturer, University of Edinburgh; UK Energy Research Centre
 - Professor Kevin Anderson, Professor of Energy and Climate Change, Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research
 - Jess Pepper, Founder and Director, Climate Café
22. The second panel will be the first where the Committee focusses on a specific sector in its remit; transport. The draft Plan projects a 68% fall in Transport emissions between 2025-40, by far the biggest absolute contributor to overall reductions in this period. Specifically, the panel will consider the policies and

proposals within the draft plan relating to electric vehicles and the development of a charging network. The Committee will hear from:

- Philip Gomm, Head of External Communications, RAC Foundation
- Andy Poole, Head of Environmental Policy, Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT)
- Jarrod Birch, Head of Policy, ChargeUK
- Professor Jillian Anable, Chair in Transport and Energy, Institute for Transport Studies, University of Leeds

Future work of the NZET Committee on the draft CCP

23. The Committee have agreed to community engagement work on the draft CCP. This includes a visit to the north-east of Scotland in the New Year; an [online consultation](#) focused on reaching people who do not normally take part in formal consultations using some themes identified from the [Committee's People's Panel report](#); and discussing the draft Plan with young people.
24. The Committee will take further formal evidence on the draft Plan at meetings in January and February on specific sectors within the Committee's remit: mainly energy supply, transport (other than EVs), and waste.
25. The Committee will take closing evidence from the Cabinet Secretary for Transport and the Cabinet Secretary for Climate Action and Energy before reporting to the Parliament. We expect there to be a Chamber debate on the draft Plan just before the end of the scrutiny period on 5 March 2026.

Clerks to the Committee December 2025