

Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee
Tuesday 6 January 2026
1st Meeting, 2026 (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](#) for a period of 120 days.
2. The Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee is leading a cross-committee effort to scrutinise the draft Plan. On 6 January, the Committee will hear from two panels covering: transport; and waste management and the circular economy.

Background

3. The [Climate Change \(Scotland\) Act 2009](#) is the main Scottish legislation on climate change. Since coming into force, it has been amended by the [Climate Change \(Emission Reduction Targets\) \(Scotland\) Act 2019](#) and the [Climate Change \(Emissions Reduction Targets\) \(Scotland\) Act 2024](#).
4. Following the passing of these three Acts, Scotland has a statutory target of reaching net zero by 2045¹ and four “carbon budgets”² which map the required emission reductions from now to 2045. Carbon budgets were set by regulation, [following a report by the NZET Committee](#), in October 2025. These set out as a target (in tons) the maximum amount in carbon emissions that can be “spent” over a given period. Scotland’s carbon budgets last 5 years. Expressed as an average percentage reduction in emissions against the 1990 baseline they are:
 - 2026 to 2030 – 57% lower
 - 2031 to 2035 – 69% lower
 - 2036 to 2040 – 80% lower
 - 2041 to 2045 – 94% lower.
5. Prior to setting the carbon budgets, the Scottish Government received [advice this May from the Climate Change Committee \(CCC\)](#), the advisory body on climate change to governments in the UK. The advice outlined a “Balanced

¹ “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)

² This approach was adopted in Scotland as part of the 2024 Act. This method was already adopted for climate change legislation in Wales, Northern Ireland and the UK as a whole.

Pathway": "an ambitious but credible route to Net Zero for Scotland by 2045". The CCC pathway is referred to throughout the draft CCP.

Timeline of Parliamentary scrutiny

6. 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 that the Parliament and its committees would use this time to consider and report on the draft and ultimately debate it in the Chamber. This has been the case with all previous versions.
7. 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.
8. 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

9. 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.
10. 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

11. 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.
12. Several Scottish Parliament committees are likely to scrutinise parts of the draft CCP. A list of the committees who have either already scheduled or are considering scheduling scrutiny on the draft Plan is available on [the NZET Committee's webpage](#).

Evidence taken on the draft CCP

Call for views

13. 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.
14. The Committee launched a further [online consultation](#) once the draft Plan was laid, focused on reaching people who do not normally take part in formal consultations using some themes identified from the [report of a "People's Panel"](#) commissioned by the Committee. This closes on 25 January.

Previous meetings

15. The [Committee's first evidence session](#) on the draft CCP was on 25 November. The Committee took evidence from public sector regulators and advisory bodies. They provided a generalist overview, considering matter such as the draft's overall level of ambition, its deliverability, financing, governance, monitoring and evaluations.

16. [On 16 December](#) the Committee then heard from two panels:

- The first included academics, a community group representative and campaigning groups and considered similar themes to the panel on 25 November.
- The second panel discussed what the draft plan says about electric vehicles (EVs) and developing charging networks. This was the first panel diving into a sector in detail.

Meeting on 6 January meeting

17. Panel 1 on 6 January will cover all main aspects of the transport sector except EVs: matters like reducing car use, encouraging more sustainable modes of travel, like walking, bikes or public transport, shifting freight from road to rail or water, and what the draft calls “co-benefits” from decarbonising transport.

18. The Committee will hear from:

- Professor Adrian Davis FFPH, Professor of Transport and Health, Transport Research Institute; Edinburgh Napier University
- Professor Rachel Aldred, Professor of Transport, Westminster University
- Lamech Solomon, Head of Decarbonisation Policy, [Logistics UK](#)
- Sara Collier, Senior Public Affairs Manager, [Confederation of Passenger Transport](#)

19. Around one third of Scotland’s total emissions are from transport. There has been a 13% reduction in transport emissions since 1990, however 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.

The [2021 Climate Change Plan Update](#) included a policy to reduce car kilometres by 20% by 2030, however this was abandoned in April 2025 following an [Audit Scotland report](#) advising it was unlikely to be met. This draft CCP commits to “reduce annual car mileage by at least 4% by 2030 (on a 2030 ‘business as usual’ forecast baseline)”.³ It also says this target will be kept under review and could be strengthened in the final CCP.

20. The draft also references already established policies to incentivise public transport use, including concessionary bus fares, the [bus infrastructure fund](#), and a commitment to funding active travel.

³ It is important to note that the 4% reduction does not mean less driving, as it is a reduction against a baseline. The baseline predicts an increase in driving. So the reduction would need to be greater than 4% by 2030 to lead to a reduction in total car mileage.

21. On freight, the draft CCP references the actions set out in the 2024 [HGV Decarbonisation Pathway for Scotland](#), including the £2 million HGV Market Readiness Fund launched in July 2025.
22. Panel 2 will focus on the waste sector. The Committee will hear from:
- Gary Walker, Head of Specialist Regulations, [Scottish Environment Protection Agency](#)
 - Duncan Simpson, Member of the RMAS Management Committee, [Resource Management Association Scotland](#)
 - Iain Gulland, Former Chief Executive (2014-2025), [Zero Waste Scotland](#)
 - Kim Pratt, Senior Circular Economy Campaigner, [Friends of the Earth Scotland](#)
 - Dr. Lucy Wishart, Lecturer in Circular Economy and Sustainable Transformations, University of Edinburgh
23. In 2023 emissions from the waste sector were under 5% of Scotland's total emissions and were 73% lower than in 1990, however emissions in the sector have been largely stable in recent years. The recent [Scottish Government Waste and Circular Economy 2030 Routemap](#) (December 2024) and the implementation of [the Circular Economy \(Scotland\) Act 2024](#) – including publishing a Circular Economy Strategy and setting statutory circular economy targets and local recycling targets – are noted in the draft Plan as key changes in waste policy since the last CCP.
24. Energy from waste is not included in the waste chapter of the draft Plan. (It appears in the energy supply chapter). However, this session is also likely to cover that matter. Incinerators in Scotland are fitted with technologies that enable electricity or heat to be generated from waste.

Future work of the NZET Committee on the draft CCP

25. In January the Committee will visit the Aberdeen area to discuss the draft CCP, net zero and the just transition with community groups and to visit a new [Energy Transition Zone](#). In January, the Committee will also have an online meeting to discuss the draft Plan with Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament.
26. The Committee will take further formal evidence on the draft Plan at meetings in January discussing policies and proposals in the draft Plan for the energy sector.
27. 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