



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee

Edward Mountain MSP
Convener, Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee

27 January 2026

Dear Edward

Scrutiny of the draft Climate Change Plan (CCP)

The Committee has concluded its scrutiny of the CCP, which focused on two key areas within our remit – the ‘buildings’ element of the CCP, and the impact on and role of local authorities in its delivery.

We will consider our draft report at our meeting on 3 February, and once it is agreed I will send that to both yourself as Convener of the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee, and to the Scottish Government.

I am aware however that your Committee will be taking evidence from the Cabinet Secretary for Climate Action and Energy before then, and I am therefore writing to you with a summary of the key themes which have emerged during our scrutiny, in order that your Committee may take these into consideration when questioning the Cabinet Secretary.

The summary below does not represent conclusions or recommendations by the Committee, but outlines the key points raised by witnesses other than the Scottish Government.

Committee scrutiny

The Committee's scrutiny has comprised the following:

- A round-table discussion with a wide range of stakeholders
- Oral evidence from local authority representatives
- Oral evidence from a panel of experts on skills and training, and on public engagement and support
- An informal online meeting with members of the public with experience of retrofitting their homes

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- A visit to a heat network site in Midlothian
- Consideration of the written submissions made to the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee prior to publication of the draft CCP
- Inviting written submissions from local authorities, and from organisations providing oral evidence.
- Taking oral evidence from the Cabinet Secretary for Housing, and the Cabinet Secretary for Local Government and Finance.

Key themes: local authorities

In respect of our scrutiny of the role of local authorities in delivering the CCP and the impact on them, the following themes have emerged:

- The CCP is broadly welcomed, and the sector is committed to delivering net zero. However there is a need for a **detailed delivery framework** - a 'route-map' - to give clarity to local authorities. This could be co-produced by Scottish Government and Cosla.
- Local authorities are committed to tackling climate change and delivering net zero, but they face **funding and resource challenges**, with competing priorities (such as a shortfall in funding essential social care services), the need for multi-year funding to give certainty, and the need for skills and capacity- building given that authorities typically have only small teams working on delivering net zero.
- On the issue of **data and monitoring**, local authorities described a need for combining local and national intelligence, and the creation of indicators on delivery and progress to enable funds to be directed where needed and to change the course of action if required. Local authorities' data can be more up to date than emissions data, and therefore can provide early warning signals.
- As the CCP sets out, regional **collaboration** is important. The Committee heard about examples of successful cross-authority working which can be built on, and the sharing of best practice.
- **Transport** remains the biggest challenge for local authorities, which will require significant investment.
- With regard **energy** issues, local generation of renewables presents an enormous opportunity but there are challenges to ensuring community benefit.
- Authorities differ in the challenges which they face in boosting the use of **heat networks**, including a lack of finance and investment to scale up activity. Existing buildings may require upgrading, and in more rural and remote areas a dispersed population limits their viability.

- **Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategies (LHEES)** have been developed by all 32 local authorities setting out their long-term plan for decarbonising heat in buildings and improving their energy efficiency. These have been a valuable tool in collecting important data but are not in themselves a delivery mechanism.

Key themes: Buildings

With regard the ‘buildings’ element of the CCP, the following themes emerged from the evidence the Committee has received:

- Witnesses were concerned that the draft CCP does not bring forward new actions and may not sufficiently accelerate the pace of change. There were frustrations that there has been a ‘lost decade’ and a ‘drifting of policy’.
- Stakeholders had anticipated that a **Heat in Buildings Bill** (which the Scottish Government committed to laying during this session of Parliament) would provide the necessary clarity about the actions they need to take. However there will now instead be a Buildings (Heat and Energy Performance) and Heat Networks (Scotland) Bill which has been published in draft with the intention of laying it after this year’s election. Witnesses described the uncertainty which has been caused by delays to bringing forward heat in buildings legislation.
- The original Heat in Buildings Bill was to have mandated the installation of heat pumps, which will not be the case in the revised bill. Witnesses were concerned whether this will sufficiently drive action by homeowners.
- There is broad support for the CCP’s ambition to **decarbonise buildings by 2045**, but we heard concerns about whether it goes far enough or fast enough. Witnesses are concerned that the targets create a ‘cliff-edge’ scenario, with modest progress being made in the first decade, followed by unrealistic expectations later. There were calls for increased front-loading of investment and action.
- **Retrofitting** existing properties to ensure they are energy efficient and warm is seen as being vital. Witnesses described the importance of delivering this at scale and at pace, and ensuring that it is affordable for households. It was suggested that there needs to be a national plan for how this will be delivered.
- At the same time, retrofitting cannot be delivered by individuals alone, one building at a time – there needs to be a structured **area-based system** if it is to happen at the scale required. This systematic approach would enable local supply chains and skills to be developed, and keep down costs. Clear guidance could be provided about how specific **housing ‘archetypes’** can be made more energy efficient, and on how to retrofit Scotland’s tenements. There may be a role for local authorities in becoming trusted suppliers.
- There is a significant **gap in supply chains and in the skills required** across trades delivering construction and retrofit. At the same time there is an

economic opportunity to create jobs, but delivering that will require significant investment in apprenticeships, re-training and retention, in particular for SMEs. The gap is more stark in rural and remote areas, with Highland council having to source contractors from within the Central Belt.

- **Consumers** need to be active participants in the transition to net zero, but people remain unsure where to obtain trusted advice. There needs to be a comprehensive public engagement strategy which recognises people's different motives for taking action, and one-stop shops for retrofit guidance. Home Energy Scotland's advice and support does not suit all circumstances, and may not be able to respond to a significantly increased demand in the future.
- Rebalancing the **price of electricity** is essential to reduce the running costs of zero carbon heating, but the powers to do so lie with the UK Government. The costs for households of retrofitting (in particular the installation of heat pumps) is high, and there are some limitations to existing grants and loans which could be addressed.
- **Communities** need to be able to see the benefit of the transition to net zero. People are frustrated at living in close proximity to developments such as windfarms but their energy bills remaining high. The Committee heard about the challenges to community ownership.
- Witnesses described the importance of linking climate action with reducing **fuel poverty** and improving health outcomes. They welcomed the commitment in the CCP to reduce fuel poverty. The importance of making fabric improvements to properties was highlighted, in order to improve energy efficiency and reduce under-heating and associated health impacts.
- The CCP's reference to being **technology-neutral** was welcomed, although witnesses noted that the plan predominantly references heat pumps without referring to the role that other technologies can play such as air-to-air heat pumps.

I hope that this summary is of use to the Committee as it concludes its scrutiny of the draft Climate Change Plan.

Yours sincerely,

Ariane Burgess MSP
Convener