



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Màiri McAllan MSP  
Cabinet Secretary for Wellbeing  
Economy, Net Zero and Energy  
Scottish Government

**Net Zero, Energy and Transport  
Committee**

c/o Clerk to the Committee  
Room T3.40  
The Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh  
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By email only

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2 May 2024

Dear Màiri,

### **People's Panel on Climate Change**

The Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee is undertaking post-legislative scrutiny of Section 91 of the [Climate Change \(Scotland\) Act 2009](#) relating to public engagement on climate change.

To inform our scrutiny of this legislation, we established a People's Panel comprised of 23 members of the public and tasked them with considering how effective the Scottish Government had been on engaging the public on climate change, and how this could be improved.

I am pleased to confirm the Panel published [its report on 11 April](#) setting out a collective statement and 18 conclusions and recommendations to the Committee. I attach both in the Annexe.

We took evidence from a selection of participants in the Panel at our meeting [on 16 April](#). Afterwards, the Committee agreed to bring the Panel's work to your attention and to seek the Scottish Government's views on its conclusions and recommendations. In your correspondence of [18 April](#), you said the Scottish Government was intending to take forward a new assembly focused on developing public understanding of the implications of the transition to net zero for households. In outlining your response to the People's Panel recommendations, I would also ask you to include further detail on the work of the assembly you are establishing, including timescales and the structure.

On behalf of the Committee, I request a response by **30 May**.

Yours sincerely,

*Edward Mountain*

Edward Mountain MSP

Convener

**Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee**

## **Annex 1: People's Panel Collective Statement**

As a panel we have evaluated how effective the Scottish Government has been at engaging the public on climate change and Scotland's Climate Change targets and we believe the Government could be more ambitious; delivering a positive narrative on climate change and enabling Scotland to set a standard of excellence. The panel have heard a range of evidence, including their collective lived experience, and feel the Government has not proven that it has effectively communicated to the public about climate change.

There needs to be truth and honesty from the Scottish Government about the scale of the challenge, and a compelling vision of the better world we are all aiming for. The panel feel that people need to know they are being told the truth in order to mobilise together on the challenge ahead. The public needs to trust in the Government and that everyone is tackling climate change together.

The panel have considered all evidence they have heard and concluded that collaboration with expert local and community led organisations is the key to success. We have learnt there is inconsistency in communication, education, evaluation, the allocation and amounts of funding and, ultimately, that there is an action gap across Scotland. There has clearly been a short-term approach to funding that has been creating barriers for organisations engaging the public to deliver their work, for example the Climate Hubs. We would like the Scottish Government to take responsibility for ensuring all projects are evaluated consistently, to collate that information and signpost it clearly to the public and to organisations.

The panel recognise that change is not easy but needs to happen; we have learnt about the urgency and need for immediate action. On learning that there is positive activity happening across the country, the panel believes that the Government needs to take bolder action on cultural change to ensure everyone is invested. The Scottish Government needs to support the sharing of stories and create accessible banks of resources, which can inspire action, hope and possibility.

The panel would like the Government to commit to understanding the action gap and barriers to participation – we've heard 85% of people are aware of climate change yet have barriers to taking action, particularly vulnerable people and communities.

There needs be more support from the Scottish Government to enable businesses to communicate the action they are taking to address climate change. There is a need to show a commitment to a shared responsibility between governments, business and the public, and demonstrating this across all demographics.

There needs to be more opportunities for the Scottish Government to listen to the public and their experiences, so money spent addresses real need. The panel felt that there needed to be more detailed, transparent and holistic routes to take action.

## Annex 2: People's Panel Recommendations

### Young People

#### Recommendation 1 – unanimous

**There needs to be** within the curriculum climate change as a compulsory subject from primary and into high school and children should be involved in developing this.

**So that** all children are made aware/have the opportunity to engage and talk to/influence their parents and help change within the home and at a local level.

**Because** this is only currently optional - it would ensure that all pupils gain a basic understanding of climate change, energy production, global concerns and green job opportunities.

### Communication

#### Recommendation 2 – 95% support

**The Scottish Government needs** an accountable and transparent action plan. Communication needs to be adapted to different demographics. Any policy or strategy should be short and simple and understandable.

**So that** all people can understand the message but hear messages that are tailored to their demographic and the actions they can take.

**Because** people (particularly young people) have told us that strategy and policy documents are too long, full of jargon and difficult to understand. Some actions are only relevant to some people/demographics (eg heat pumps: landlords and owners; fast fashion: young people).

#### Recommendation 3 – 90% support

**There needs to be** a consistent positive media campaign to share local and national success stories of tackling climate change across the whole country.

**So that** there are positive messages communicated to the public about what has been achieved and benefits to changes in lifestyle are apparent and easy to implement.

**Because** some people are worried and anxious about climate change. To alleviate anxiety provide evidence of solutions and that they are part of the solution. People are more motivated when they see that they are making a change.

#### Recommendation 4 – unanimous

**There needs to be** better information, communication and financial support from the Scottish Government on potential household actions to reach targets.

**So that** people can easily understand the benefits of, and implement changes to their homes to make them more energy efficient and understand how they can afford to make changes without putting themselves in debt.

**Because** it is currently confusing to navigate eg Home Energy Scotland website, and changes are generally seen as an unnecessary expense.

## Business

### Recommendation 5 – 86%

**There needs to be** Government regulation of business around climate targets and not subsidising companies with negative impact.

**So that** businesses are held accountable for meeting net zero alongside the government and the public.

**Because** we need every part of society, including big companies, to pull in the same direction or efforts feel futile. North East Scotland Climate Action Network highlighted the difference between the amount of money going to them for community action and the much larger amounts going to business.

**MINORITY STATEMENT – a minority felt this recommendation was not realistic and not enough evidence had been provided to support it.**

### Recommendation 6 – 90% support

**There needs to be** a change to the way national capital projects like installation of heat pumps and home insulation are administered.

**So that** local businesses can be used to facilitate the capital projects. This should be resourced by the local authority which will result in better public engagement.

**Because** this would increase the investment in the local economy and ensure that this would improve value for money. Local people would benefit from national capital projects, rather than there being a huge waste of public funds with the current funding system.

**MINORITY STATEMENT – a minority felt this recommendation while a good idea did not relate to the questions the panel had been asked to answer.**

### Recommendation 7 – unanimous

**There must be** a requirement that businesses and corporations that receive public funds from the Scottish Government need to invest in supporting the public and public services linked to climate action and the local community.

**So that** more projects will have the financial security to carry out and complete projects to both engage the public and to help the Scottish Government to meet Scotland's climate change targets.

**Because** we have not seen enough collaboration between business and corporations and the Scottish Government as well as local authorities. There are discrepancies in funding distribution and we have seen from international examples that business can contribute to local communities. The panel did not see this in Scotland.

## Funding

### Recommendation 8 – unanimous

**There needs to be** robust longer-term funding in a timely fashion to help the expansion and increase of climate hubs. This should guarantee secure funding to adequately resource climate hubs – with a minimum of 3-5 years.

**So that** there is an expansion of climate hubs country wide and resources are not wasted so climate hubs can have more confidence and stability and ensure engagement happens more regularly at a local level.

**Because** we've spoken with 3 climate change hubs and we see there is not enough integration between each of them and a general lack of resources. Short term funding does not lend itself to positive change and progress. There is a lot of research that proves local engagement and participation leads to more tangible outcomes.

## **Participation and Communities**

### **Recommendation 9 - unanimous**

**There needs to be** a focus on local, community-focused work e.g. community wealth building, asset mapping and sharing good practice.

**So that** there is a more coordinated climate action approach that reflects the demographics of the area.

**Because** communities can build on existing strengths and learn from proven case studies, showcasing both rural and urban areas that are leading by example.

### **Recommendation 10 - unanimous**

**There needs to be** a legal obligation on all local authorities to co-create local climate policy, supported by funding from the Scottish Government.

**So that** policy reflects the real needs of local communities and money isn't needlessly spend on unwanted projects.

**Because** actions and priorities will meet local needs and communities will have ownership over local policy, which is proven to encourage buy-in.

### **Recommendation 11 - 85% support**

**The Scottish Government should** resource and implement face to face engagement, particularly with disengaged people and not just focus on social media.

**So that** we bring the disengaged to engaged.

**Because** of evidence we heard from a youth worker from Dundee City Council that face to face interaction was more effective than social media – example of organising a local meeting with an IPCC Scientist and the attention this brought. Engagement is not just face to face or online, it is a broader spectrum of tactics that can be used.

***MINORITY STATEMENT – a minority felt this recommendation was less important than the panel's other proposals as it was already being done.***

### **Recommendation 12 - 86% support**

**The Scottish Government needs to** continue to develop a cultural programme to include those who are attracted to the arts, with a focus on grassroots and participatory cultural projects.

**So that** the Government is reaching a wide and diverse segment of society and reaching people where they are, not just middle-class audiences.

**Because** different groups consume information in different ways, as evidenced by Ben Twist of Creative Carbon Scotland. Collective thinking, as happens with many cultural projects, is a catalyst for social change.

### **Recommendation 13 – unanimous**

**There needs to be** a commercial benefit for communities which have to host large scale renewable projects, for example, offshore wind farms.

**So that** areas which are adversely affected by the environmental and visual impact of such projects are compensated.

**Because** currently remote communities are disproportionately disadvantaged by projects that offer no commercial benefit to those communities, which have high incidence of fuel poverty.

## **Making it easier for people to contribute**

### **Recommendation 14 – unanimous**

**There needs to be** increased investment in and awareness of affordable climate friendly technology for people in lower income households.

**So that** people in lower income households are empowered to make changes that are more suitable for them.

**Because** we heard evidence that people in lower income households and, for example, the elderly and vulnerable people can't afford technology such as heat pumps.

### **Recommendation 15 - unanimous**

**There needs to be** improvements made in enabling the general public to access loan/grant applications via support from existing organisations like climate hubs. This needs to cover everyone and not just those on low income.

**So that** it's more accessible to people, particularly the elderly.

**Because** the current systems are not very user friendly.

### **Recommendation 16 - 90% support**

**There needs to be** a centralised climate data gathering process covering all demographics to be managed and publicly reported on annually by the Scottish Government.

**So that** the government and public are able to identify key areas to work on to maximise knowledge and action around climate change across all demographics in Scotland regardless of age, race, disabilities or socioeconomic status.

**Because** without tangible research evidence it is not possible to make reasonable recommendations for the public to follow – we need to identify areas for improvement and examples of good practice.

### ***MINORITY STATEMENT – a minority felt this recommendation was too vague in terms of what data is to be collected***

### **Recommendation 17 – 90% agreed**

**The Scottish Government needs to** improve the efficiency and affordability of public transport nationwide, by enhancing timetables and listening to and taking action on local transport needs. We support free bus travel for all.

**So that** people have a fair choice about using public transport. The Scottish Government should demonstrate that they are taking action on climate change and allowing people to more easily attend and take part in community activities.

**Because** we heard evidence of the climate impact of the use of private vehicles and evidence about public transport particularly from young people,

people from rural areas where services are poor and people on low income and disabilities. People can't contribute to climate change targets if they don't have access to climate friendly services.

**Recommendation 18 – unanimous**

**There needs to be** support and funding for the creation of community spaces and raised awareness of existing spaces. There needs to be better access to climate information and promotion of local opportunities to get involved in climate action in places such as Job Centres, libraries, Citizens Advice.

**So that** everyone can access tailored and informed advice, practical help and training and can raise issues and barriers that prevent them from tackling climate action which can be fed in to a standardised, open source national public database. It will also enable a broader awareness of action that can be taken to tackle climate change among sections of communities who have been most impacted by the cost of living crisis.

**Because** this will help identify patterns around barriers to climate action so they can be addressed, and to bring communities together to help mobilise them; the panel heard from Poverty Alliance about how it doesn't need to be a financial input to make a difference.