

# Draft Climate Change Plan

## Submission from Dr Elizabeth Lawson, 10 February 2026

I am writing on behalf of a working group of community organisations, public sector bodies and academic institutions collaborating on the water and wastewater agenda in rural and island Scotland. Our membership includes Scottish Rural Action, Newcastle University, Kilfinan Community Council, Glasgow Caledonian University, Papa Westray Development Trust, National Farmers Union Scotland, Strathclyde University, James Hutton Institute, SRUC and several local authorities

On the back of submitting a response to the Scottish Government's draft Climate Change Plan, **we feel it is important to highlight to the Committee the critical omission of proper consideration of water management in the current draft of the Plan, and in the accompanying Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).**

The success of the Plan, from energy, waste and infrastructure solutions to land management approaches, is entirely dependent on an abundance of water, and almost every action will therefore also impact the availability and quality of water. Yet, repeatedly, water is not properly considered.

Within the draft Climate Change Plan, water is mentioned tangentially through reference to the Scottish National Adaptation Plan (SNAP3). SNAP3 however says nothing specific about strategic water policy beyond noting the fact that the Scottish Government consulted on the water and wastewater agenda in 2023, and therefore policy will be set based on the outcome of the consultation. Nothing, however, has come of this 2023 consultation. This means that both SNAP3, and the Climate Change Plan, are built on a catastrophic void - a policy to safeguard Scotland's water that does not exist now, and that does not appear to have political commitment to bring to existence.

The SEA covers the water agenda in more detail but still with critical omissions, including failure to take into account the prevalence of private water supplies in Scotland. Like the Climate Change Plan, it also fails to point to any tangible policy developments that will safeguard the future of water quality and availability in Scotland. Instead, it concludes that the actions in the Climate Change Plan will probably improve water quality and availability, and that any negative impacts will probably be "localised." There is no acknowledgement that without water, most of the Plan's actions will not be viable.

As a working group, we are entirely supportive of the Climate Change Plan, and of its intentions and actions. We also acknowledge that the Climate Change Plan is not the place for a detailed policy on water. Our consultation response is therefore not a criticism of the Plan itself, but a warning that unless the Climate Change Plan outlines the pressing need for coherent policy that safeguards Scotland's water, for its environment, its people and its industry, it will fail to meet targets and inadvertently give rise to unresolvable tensions with regards to planning, investment, the just transition and community empowerment.

**Our ask is simple but urgent - that the Climate Change Plan, as one of the most defining documents to guide government policy over the coming decade, makes specific mention of the need for a coherent and comprehensive policy on water** – a Hydro Nation Mark II which would aim to ensure that there is always enough water to resource the Climate Change Plan actions, while potential negative impacts of climate action, and climate change, on water and waste water systems are anticipated and addressed.

Whatever the policy is called, it will need to be designed around community-led action and to a large degree, decentralised technologies, recognising the need for regional and local solutions to water and waste water management challenges. It would also need to address water poverty. As water becomes a scarcer and more valuable resource the just transition approach requires government to be mindful in forward planning so that communities, especially those that are more vulnerable, are not disadvantaged financially or in other ways.

Kindest Regards,

Elizabeth

**Dr Elizabeth Lawson**

Percy Research Fellow