



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Criminal Justice Committee

Edward Mountain
Convener
Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee

29 January 2026

Dear Convener,

Joint scrutiny of the draft Climate Change Plan

In my [letter of 1 December 2025](#), I set out the Committee's approach to scrutinising the efforts of key justice organisations to meet commitments under Scotland's climate change targets.

A summary of the evidence received during our pre-budget scrutiny sessions and through written correspondence is set out below along with the resulting conclusions and recommendations from our pre-budget scrutiny report.

Police Scotland and the Scottish Police Authority (SPA)

At our [meeting of 5 November 2025](#), DCC Alan Speirs set out the work of Police Scotland's sustainability team. He noted that it produces an annual report for the SPA board and that this year's report showed considerable progress is being made on reducing the organisation's carbon footprint.

DCC Speirs told the Committee it has become "really evident that, in some ways, we have taken the work on the estate as far as we can" in terms of meeting climate targets. He also noted that a large proportion of the fleet is made up of electric vehicles and that the "ambition is to continue to progress that."

Lynn Brown, Head of Finance, Police Scotland agreed that the estate and fleet are key areas of investment in relation to sustainability and that they want to "have a modern, fit-for-purpose estate." In its [response to the Committee's call for views](#) it was noted that of the overall capital expenditure plan for 2026-27 of £93.9 million, £24 million is earmarked for investment in the estate and £15.2 million is planned for its fleet, including the continued development of an ultra-low emission fleet to meet climate change commitments.

With regards to the estate modernisation programme, Chris Brown, Chief Executive of the SPA commented that it allows Police Scotland to build efficiency in from the beginning "instead of having to patch things up later." However, he also highlighted that some of the reductions in Police Scotland's emissions relate to the disposal of buildings, some of which will go on to be used elsewhere in the public sector and

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was of view that “a more holistic approach is needed to ensure that the actions that we collectively take are, in the round, contributing to reducing emissions.”

Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS)

In [written evidence](#), the SFRS set out the work undertaken during its 2020-25 Carbon Management Plan (CMP) which focused on three key areas; reducing energy waste, the installation of renewable energy generation and the removal of small-scale gas heating systems. Over £12 million was invested in carbon reduction measures across the estate during this time and more than 400 projects were delivered to make sites more energy efficient. Completed work includes the installation of heating control systems and solar panels and upgrades to building insulation and EV chargers.

The 2020-25 CMP reduced carbon by 4,784 TCO₂e over the 5-year period, which although significant, was only 68% of its original reduction target of 7,000 tonnes. SFRS notes that considerable progress was made during the first three years of the plan when external funding was available, but the reductions slowed in years 4 and 5 as reduced grant funding, internal budgetary pressures and resourcing impacted progress.

Its CMP for 2026-31 is currently being drafted and will include over 120 projects, requiring investment of more than £4.6 million. It is exploring the possibility of installing a large-scale solar panel field at its Cambuslang site and the remaining oil boiler at Invergordon Community Fire Station and Training Centre will be replaced with electric heating. Multiple sites will benefit from smart heating controls, new windows and doors, insulation, LED lighting, and small-scale air sourced heat pumps.

SFRS advises that it will also continue to monitor the carbon footprint of purchased goods to record the impact of, and align procurement decisions with, its net zero targets.

In relation to its fleet, SFRS currently has EV chargers in over 140 sites to power over 260 electric vehicles (the majority of which are pool cars). Around a fifth of SFRS' light fleet are Ultra Low Emission Vehicles. The [SFRS Annual Performance Review Report for 2024/25](#) highlights that £1.4 million has been invested to reduce emission output of 24 Light Weight Rescue Pumps. Its light fleet was also expanded with 11 Ford Ranger pick-ups, 9 Kia Niro EVs, 16 eVito panel vans and 4 eCitan small panel vans. 20 electric cars were also purchased to replace leased electric vehicles.

With regards to its commitment to protecting communities from the impacts of climate change, such as wildfires and flooding, it has enhanced its wildfire preparedness through expanded training, deployment of specialised equipment and the appointment of 14 Wildfire Tactical Advisors. £397,735 was invested during 2024/25 into delivering the Wildfire Strategy as part of a £1.725 million investment which commenced in 2022/23. £35,000 has also been invested in PPE for Flood First Responder Stations and an additional £30,000 was spent on the procurement of 200 life jackets to support water rescue operations.

Scottish Prison Service (SPS)

At our [meeting of 19 November 2025](#), we heard from Teresa Medhurst, Chief Executive of the SPS on how it's addressing its climate targets, particularly in light of the age of the current prison estate. Ms Medhurst told us that the SPS takes its responsibilities for tackling climate change very seriously and that it has been factored into the facilities of their new builds. The closures of HMP Inverness and HMP Barlinnie will have a significant impact on reducing emissions, and the new facilities that replace them will meet all the new requirements and targets.

Ms Medhurst also noted that SPS has increased the capital funding that it requires for next year to meet its climate change obligations.

In addition, in evidence to the Committee on [26 November 2025](#), the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs told members that the new HMP Highland will have zero direct emissions, and that no fossil fuels will be burned in the running of the new HMP Glasgow as it will be all electric.

The Scottish Courts and Tribunal Service (SCTS)

In [written evidence](#), the SCTS highlighted its [Sustainability Strategy](#), which sets out its ambition “to continue our progress on the path to net zero direct emissions by 2045”. It has already reduced its total emissions by 54% since 2009-10 and has a range of further activities planned or already underway. For example:

- it has invested in building energy management systems, metering, controls, and sensors to collect data and optimise how its buildings operate and reduce energy consumption.
- LED lighting upgrades continue to be rolled out across the estate.
- it has undertaken building fabric improvements, heating, cooling and ventilation improvements, and window upgrades (e.g. highly efficient vacuum glazing was recently rolled-out at Edinburgh High Court).
- it has installed Solar photovoltaic panels on 10 buildings with additional projects planned for the Office the Public Guardian, Glasgow High Court, and Glasgow Sheriff Court.
- opened more evidence by commission suites to reduce the need for vulnerable witnesses to travel to court. The introduction of facilities to allow remote witness testimony (e.g. for police and expert witnesses) has also reduced the need for them to travel to court.
- changed its whole pool car fleet to electric vehicles.

In terms of future plans, it is currently looking for opportunities to decarbonise heating systems, by assessing opportunities for heat pumps and is liaising with local authorities in relation to the development of heat networks. It is also looking at its procurement function to identify sustainability improvements in its contractual

arrangements and is surveying staff on their travel patterns to see if more can be done to encourage sustainable travel.

The submission also highlights that due to the historic nature of many of its buildings, there is significant cost and practical challenges that come with investing the estate. It is of the view that these buildings not only need to be improved to increase their energy efficiency but also to withstand the effects of climate-change related weather events.

Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS)

In a [follow-up letter to the Committee](#), COPFS indicated that it continues to exceed its target to reduce CO₂e emissions from the use of gas and electricity in its buildings by over 2.5% per year from the baseline year of 2022-23 with emissions reduced by 13% overall by the end of March 2025. A large part of the overall reduction is due to an increase in national renewable energy generation. An overall reduction in electricity consumption is partly due to the installation of PV arrays in some offices.

In addition, it successfully applied for funding from the Scottish Government Energy Efficiency Grant Scheme for two projects. The first was a complete low carbon retrofit of the Elgin COPFS office completed in 2024. The completed building achieved an EPC score of 6 and an A+ rating, a significant improvement on the previous D rating and will be Zero Carbon Ready for when the grid electricity is generated from 100% renewable sources.

The second project was a similar low carbon retrofit of Edinburgh Crown Office in 2025. Estimated savings from the retro fit are expected to be 467,472 kWh of electricity and tCO₂e: 85 tonnes. The completed building achieved an EPC score of 7 and an A+ rating, significantly improving on the previous D rating.

Scottish Government

At our [meeting of 26 November 2025](#), the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs noted the measures being taken by the organisations above and told members that tackling the climate emergency is a priority for the Scottish Government as a whole and the justice portfolio is expected to contribute in the same way as other areas.

In a [follow-up letter](#), the Cabinet Secretary noted that the Chief Constable of Police Scotland, the SPA, the SFRS, the SPS, the SCTS and the Scottish Legal Aid Board are all subject to the statutory climate change reporting duty. As such, they are required to report annually on their compliance with the climate change duties, on a mandatory basis and their reports are published on the [Sustainable Scotland Network](#) website.

It is clear from the evidence we received that the justice sector takes its responsibilities in relation to climate change very seriously and that there is a broad range of ongoing climate-focused work taking place across the key organisations. However, we made the following points in our [pre-budget scrutiny report](#):

- We recommend that the Cabinet Secretary should ensure that the upcoming Scottish Spending Review and the first Climate Budget clearly set out how the policies and efforts of justice sector stakeholders will be underpinned with dedicated resources to continue to address climate change (and cybersecurity) in a joined-up and coordinated way across the justice sector.
- Of particular note is the impact climate change is having on the role and work of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service. We noted that this service is, quite literally, on the front-line of protecting the people of Scotland from climate-driven dangers such as increased flooding and wildfire events.

In the [Scottish Government's response to the Committee's report](#), the Cabinet Secretary recognised the positive work that is taking place across the justice portfolio but stated that it is for individual organisations to prioritise and allocate sufficient budget from their annual settlements to meet their climate change requirements and responsibilities.

In addition, the Cabinet Secretary's response highlighted that the Scottish Government has been working with SFRS and rural stakeholders on improving both prevention, coordination on wildfire warnings and a joined-up approach to response. She also noted that flooding and wildfires are a core part of SFRS activity and are therefore included in the core funding provided to them.

I hope this is helpful in informing your scrutiny of the draft Climate Change Plan.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Audrey N: csn'.

Audrey Nicoll MSP
Convener