



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee

Edward Mountain MSP  
Convener  
Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee

**23 January 2026**

Dear Edward,

### Scottish Government draft Climate Change Plan

The Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee agreed to feed into the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee's scrutiny of the draft Climate Change Plan by considering within our Pre-Budget call for views how the culture and heritage sector supports the Scottish Government's priorities and outcomes relating to the Plan and to Net Zero.

The Committee's Pre-Budget call for views included the following questions relevant to the draft Climate Change Plan—

1. How is the culture and heritage sector addressing its own operational emissions in line with the Scottish Government's net zero ambitions?
2. What is the role of the culture and heritage sector in shaping and informing public attitudes on climate and sustainability, and in scrutinising and challenging the political response?
3. What impact might the Climate Change Plan have on the culture and heritage sector, and how could funding streams better support culture and heritage organisations to contribute towards net zero outcomes?

The responses to the call for views are available to view [online](#). Additionally, the Committee took evidence on the draft Plan at our meetings on [11 September 2025](#), [18 September 2025](#) and [25 September 2025](#).

Our [Pre-Budget report](#) outlines the evidence we received as well as a number of recommendations to the Scottish Government relating to the culture sector's role in shaping public attitudes, current funding challenges and the impact of audience travel. I have attached the relevant section of the report at **Annexe A** for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,

---

Contact: Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee, The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP. Email [CEEAC.Committee@parliament.scot](mailto:CEEAC.Committee@parliament.scot). We welcome calls through Relay UK and in BSL through Contact Scotland BSL.

Clare Adamson

**Clare Adamson MSP**  
**Convener**

## Climate change and Net Zero

128. Respondents to the Committee's call for views indicated that organisations across the cultural and heritage sector are actively implementing a wide range of measures to reduce emissions and contribute to Scotland's net zero ambitions. Culture for Climate Scotland (CCS) noted that 46% of cultural organisations (reporting to it) were on track to be net zero by 2045.
129. Some of the actions highlighted in submissions included:
  - Energy efficiency upgrades such as LED lighting, improved insulation, and Building Management Systems (e.g. NMS, Community Leisure UK).
  - Renewable energy integration, including photovoltaic panels (e.g. Museums Association referenced Gairloch Museum) and switching to green energy tariffs.
  - Sustainable exhibition and production practices, with reuse of materials and modular displays (e.g. Museums Association referenced Perth Museum's "Waters Rising").
  - Digital engagement and remote working to reduce travel emissions.
  - Carbon literacy training for staff and volunteers (e.g. Community Leisure UK members).
  - Promotion of sustainable travel, including cycle-to-work schemes and partnerships with transport providers (e.g. RSNO).
  - Circular economy initiatives, such as the Arts Resource Management Scotland (ARMS) project (see SCAN submission) and Lend & Mend Hubs in libraries (see SLIC).
  - Carbon budgeting and reporting, with sector-wide data collection led by CCS.

## Shaping public attitudes

130. Submissions to the Committee's call for views outlined the impact of the sector on shaping public attitudes. Creative Scotland's submission stated that "research has shown that the cultural and creative sector are well placed to play this role, engaging with the narratives and challenges of climate change and helping us to envisage alternative futures." Additionally, the Museums Association highlighted that "Museums are ideal places for people to have big conversations about complex issues."
131. Several exhibitions were highlighted by respondents, including "Rewrite the Future" at the Wardlaw Museum (MGS submission) and "Waters Rising" at Perth Museum (Museums Association), which were said to have engaged audiences with climate themes. Participatory projects like "Sewing Hope: Quilts for Climate Change" (Museums Association) and the RSNO's "Sounds of the Deep" schools initiative were said to demonstrate how creative programming can foster climate literacy and intergenerational dialogue.

132. CCS told the Committee that cultural organisations “reach the hard-to-reach groups and provide welcoming spaces” and “provide creative, accessible and restorative ways of having conversations about climate change.”
133. CCS also highlighted the Scottish Government’s climate change public engagement strategy, which contains a reference to the role of the cultural sector, and the climate change public engagement fund that certain organisations in the cultural sector have taken advantage of. However, CCS noted that the fund is “very small” and oversubscribed, explaining that “The application success rate was something like 12 or 13 per cent during the last round of funding. Loads of organisations want to do public engagement work on climate change but are not able to access the funds to do it.”
134. CCS went on to state that it is—
  - ” interested in how funds that are being mobilised to address the environmental emergency can be used by the cultural sector, because we have a lot of the skills that are needed and I do not think that they are being taken advantage of at the moment. It is an important funding stream.

135. **The Committee recognises the role of the culture sector in shaping public understanding of, and attitudes towards, climate change. We recommend that the sector’s role be recognised in the Scottish Government’s Climate Change Plan and that the Scottish Government considers how funding to support net zero ambitions could be used to further the impact of the culture sector on public attitudes.**

## Funding challenges

136. Submissions highlighted several further challenges facing the sector. For example, HES stated that—
  - ” With nearly a fifth of Scotland’s homes and a large proportion of public and civic buildings constructed before 1919, the challenge of decarbonising the built environment cannot be met without sustained action on traditional buildings. Preserving and adapting existing historic buildings presents a major opportunity to avoid the emissions associated with demolition and new construction, while the use of traditional materials and skills ensures compatibility, durability, and low-carbon performance over the long term.
137. Respondents to the call for views also noted that achieving net zero will require substantial capital investment. Retrofitting historic buildings, upgrading heating systems, and improving energy infrastructure are costly and complex, particularly for listed or heritage properties. NMS said—

” Achieving net zero is contingent on finding alternative carbon-free heating sources for four sites which are heated from gas boilers. Sourcing alternative heating solutions is technologically challenging and expensive, beyond our annual operating budgets. We can only achieve this level of change through partnership working and major external funds.

138. **We invite the Scottish Government to outline how it intends to address the substantial capital investment required in the culture and heritage sector in order to meet its climate change and net zero ambitions.**

## Audience travel

139. The Committee heard from CCS that audience travel to and from cultural events and venues is the largest source of emissions associated with the cultural sector and that, as such, “in terms of value for money, it is useful to focus on that.”

140. CCS suggested that possible solutions include the provision of bus travel from surrounding areas to venues through working with community transport groups or private bus companies. This, they stated, could be provided through the cultural partner itself, through collaboration with transport providers, or through the implementation of a levy on ticket sales to subsidise travel for those who need it.

141. In evidence, the Committee asked whether organisations in the culture sector experience pressure to prove that they are encouraging international visitors, rather than thinking about how the sector might focus on serving a domestic audience or address some of the impacts of audience travel. CCS responded that, though experiences vary, “there is still a pressure, in that cultural organisations, in order to be seen as being in the top flight of what they do, have to be seen to have that international impact.”

142. CCS noted, however, that this appears to be changing, citing as an example the recent funding decisions from Creative Scotland which made the international aspect criteria non-compulsory, compared with the situation in previous years. This, they explained, resulted in a greater number of smaller community arts organisations receiving funding “that do the kind of work that does not have an international impact but has enormous local significance.”

143. Noting the reliance on international visitors of, for example, the festivals in Edinburgh, CCS highlighted that there are “difficult questions for the culture sector about international travel” and that part of this involves “thinking about how we can do more to serve local audiences and value that kind of work.”

144. In evidence, the Cabinet Secretary told the Committee that the Scottish Government is focussing efforts on increasing public transport use and that there is a need to ensure that the culture sector is “properly served with the ability for people to travel with the least environmental impact possible.”

145. The Committee notes the evidence heard that audience travel to and from cultural events and venues is the largest source of emissions associated with the cultural sector. As such, we welcome the Cabinet Secretary's confirmation that the Scottish Government is focussing efforts on public transport use. The Committee requests more details on how the Scottish Government is supporting greater use of public transport to cultural events or sites and how progress is being measured.

146. Noting the evidence heard that there are "difficult questions for the culture sector about international travel", we also ask the Scottish Government to outline what steps it is taking to address aviation emissions associated with audience travel.