

Correspondence from Zero Waste Scotland, 9 September 2026

Set out below is Zero Waste Scotland's response to the questions submitted by the Climate Action Committee in correspondence dated 4 September 2026.

Organisational priorities across Session 7

1. What do you see as the priority areas which this Committee should focus on this session to have the most impact?

A key priority for the next Parliament is the setting of Circular Economy Targets, possibly supported by other secondary legislation under the Circular Economy Act.

Beyond that, much like climate action as a whole, the transition to a circular economy is not simply about individual policies or the responsibility of a single portfolio. Decisions on the economy, public procurement, planning, skills, local government and public services all influence resource use and waste generation. The Committee should therefore be asking how effectively government is aligning these different policy areas behind shared outcomes, whether barriers to delivery are being addressed, and whether sufficient progress is being made against existing commitments.

Ultimately, the opportunities are significant, but real change will only happen if all parts of government, Parliament, business, communities and wider society play their part. Effective scrutiny should focus on how well that collective effort is being coordinated and translated into action and results.

The circular economy provides a unique bridge between the economy and environment so perhaps a joint session with the Economy, Tourism and Energy Committee to make sure the economic and environmental priorities are aligned across policy areas would be beneficial over the course of this Parliament.

We expect the Committee to closely scrutinise the work to create a new body in line with Programme for Government commitments. Given the importance of embedding circularity as an economic as well as environmental strategy, we encourage the Committee to ensure that focus is maintained, and that the emphasis on economic systems transformation to create a sustainable economy is embedded into the new organisation without being diluted or subsumed by other elements of the organisation's expansive (and largely nature-based) remit.

2. In particular where do you think engagement by the Climate Action Committee could help to enhance public participation and awareness?

Ultimately, the Committee can help bridge the gap between Scotland's climate ambitions and public participation by making climate action tangible, locally relevant and connected to people's everyday lives. This is particularly important in the transition to a circular economy, where public understanding and participation are essential to achieving long-term emissions reductions.

In particular, we see opportunities for the Committee to:

- **Spotlighting and showcasing innovative Scottish businesses.** Supporting awareness of and access to opportunities for the public to consume in a more circular manner, as well as profiling Scottish businesses, encouraging entrepreneurship and innovation in this space.
- **Championing a place-based approach and its contribution to communities and community wealth building.** Showcasing successful projects, community groups, local authorities and businesses can help demonstrate that climate action is achievable and already happening across Scotland. Public engagement is strongest when climate action is presented in terms of tangible actions that benefit households and communities. Many of the behaviours that reduce emissions, such as reducing food waste, extending product lifespans and participating in sharing or repair initiatives, can also help households save money and strengthen local communities.
- **Engage directly with communities and under-represented groups.** Public participation is improved when people feel their experiences and perspectives are heard. The Committee is well placed to support dialogues that reach beyond those already engaged in environmental issues.
- **Support greater public understanding of the circular economy.** While awareness of climate change is generally high, understanding of how resource use and waste contribute to emissions is often lower. The Committee can help communicate the important role that reducing consumption, reuse, repair and recycling play in tackling the climate emergency.
- **Promote consistency and clarity in public messaging.** Clear, evidence-based communication from trusted institutions can help address confusion, build public confidence and encourage sustained behaviour change.

Pre-budget scrutiny

3. What implications do the commitments in the Programme for Government have on your resource needs for the 2027-28 Scottish Budget, and what do you expect your key financial challenges to be in the next financial year?

Zero Waste Scotland continues to operate with strong financial discipline, underpinned by a robust focus on value for money and a medium-term workforce and financial plan aligned to anticipated funding conditions. Initiatives to deliver 20% back-office efficiencies are underway and remain on track, while front-line transformation activities are also progressing well. Together, these initiatives are helping to maximise organisational reach and impact, while strengthening our ability to attract external funding, such as through our Horizon Europe-funded construction reuse hubs project.

It remains too early to determine the full resource implications arising from Programme for Government commitments relating to the creation of a new, enlarged public body. Collaborative work involving the Scottish Government, SEPA,

NatureScot and Zero Waste Scotland has now commenced to assess the costs, resource requirements and implementation actions associated with this transition. While the Scottish Government has indicated that any required funding will be secured through normal budgetary processes, it is not yet clear whether this funding will be additional to existing allocations or will require the reprioritisation of current resources.

It is worth noting that Zero Waste Scotland's transition to public body status, completed in 2024, was successfully delivered within existing funding settlements and without the need for additional funding. We recognise, however, that the proposed creation of a new organisation, incorporating the transfer of functions from existing bodies, represents a significantly larger and more complex programme of change, both in scale and scope.

Specific policy areas and forthcoming policy milestones

4. The Scottish Government has indicated that it is not expecting statutory nature targets to be introduced within the next year. What are your views on the proposed timescales?

Zero Waste Scotland does not hold a formal position on the proposed timescales for the introduction of statutory nature targets.

We recognise that establishing statutory targets requires careful consideration to ensure they are evidence-based, deliverable and supported by appropriate governance, monitoring and reporting arrangements. It is therefore important that sufficient time is available to develop a robust framework that commands confidence among stakeholders and supports effective implementation.

From our perspective, the key consideration is not the specific timetable itself, but ensuring that any future targets are clear, measurable and aligned with wider environmental and circular economy objectives. We would encourage continued engagement with stakeholders throughout the development process to help ensure that any targets are practical, achievable and capable of driving meaningful outcomes for nature and the wider economy.

Zero Waste Scotland would be pleased to contribute relevant evidence and practical insights from our work where this would assist the Committee's consideration of this matter.

5. What engagement will your organisation expect to have in the development of statutory nature targets?

The nature and extent of our engagement would ultimately depend on the scope of the proposed targets and their relevance to Zero Waste Scotland's functions and responsibilities.

In particular, we would welcome opportunities to contribute evidence, data, analysis and practical insights on issues relating to resource use, circular economy approaches, waste prevention and sustainable consumption, where these may support the achievement of nature outcomes. We would also expect to participate in

stakeholder engagement processes, as appropriate, to help ensure that statutory targets are informed by practical delivery considerations and aligned with wider environmental and economic objectives.

6. What are your views on progress, and the anticipated timescales for action and delivery, of Ministerial duties under the Circular Economy (Scotland) Act 2024 to set targets for a circular economy and to produce a statutory code of practice on household recycling?

Zero Waste Scotland has worked closely with the Scottish Government to assist delivery of both the circular economy targets and a statutory code of practice for household recycling. Scottish Government remain committed to the development of Circular Economy Targets and a statutory Code of Practice by 2027.

For circular economy targets, Zero Waste Scotland are involved in supporting assessment of the evidence base, potential metrics and timescales for different aspects of the circular economy. This builds on our work supporting the Scottish Government to determine a robust indicator set for the Circular Economy Monitoring & Indicator Framework. We recognise that establishing targets requires careful consideration to ensure they are evidence-based, deliverable and supported by appropriate governance, monitoring and reporting arrangements. It is therefore important that sufficient time is available to develop a robust framework that commands confidence among stakeholders and supports effective implementation. On this basis it is recognised that current timelines are challenging.

For the Code of Practice for household recycling Zero Waste Scotland has provided evidence and insights to the workshops as a stakeholder as part of the process with local authorities and wider industry participants. Decisions on the final Code of Practice sit with local government and Scottish Government as a co-design process.

In parallel to this process Zero Waste Scotland has [published](#) research on organic waste collection services, new materials and approaches to waste related communications. Zero Waste Scotland will also complete the impact assessments in support of the forthcoming consultation of the code.

7. Please provide details of the development of the recently published circular economy roadmaps for the built environment and energy infrastructure and what role you will play in their delivery? For other priority areas of food and textiles, what measures are being considered and how are you supporting the building of that evidence base?

Built Environment and Energy Infrastructure Roadmaps

Both published in May 2026, the Circular Economy Roadmaps for the Built Environment and Energy Infrastructure sectors were developed through a comprehensive programme of systems mapping, stakeholder engagement, consultation and evidence gathering. The work focused on understanding the systemic drivers, barriers and opportunities influencing the adoption of circular economy practices across both sectors. Detailed systems maps were developed to identify key actors, interdependencies and leverage points, creating the foundation for long-term sector transformation.

The roadmaps take a mission-oriented approach to delivery, recognising that achieving circularity in these complex sectors requires coordinated action across industry, government, academia and the wider ecosystem. This process resulted in a suite of interventions designed to address identified barriers and create the conditions necessary for change. The Built Environment Roadmap contains twelve interventions ranging from expanding market access for circular products and services, developing infrastructure to support material reuse, and embedding circularity within policy and regulatory frameworks. Similar intervention-based approaches have been developed for Energy Infrastructure, reflecting the strategic importance and resource intensity of the sector.

The next phase moves from roadmap development into implementation. Mission Boards have been established to provide sector driven leadership, co-ordination and accountability for delivery, bringing together key stakeholders with the influence and capability to drive system-wide change. The intention is for Mission Boards to translate the roadmaps from strategic documents into practical action plans, and from there to drive delivery by working with leaders, businesses and public sector partners across the sector. Initial intervention plans for both Mission Boards will be finalised during Autumn 2026.

Zero Waste Scotland's role is to:

- Support the establishment and development of the Built Environment and Energy Infrastructure Mission Boards
- Participate as an active stakeholder on the Mission Boards
- Drive progress on interventions where Zero Waste Scotland has assumed ownership or a leadership role
- Support the development of monitoring, evaluation and learning frameworks to demonstrate progress, measure impact and inform future delivery decisions
- Provide strategic oversight of roadmap delivery and ensure activities remain connected to wider organisational and Scottish Government priorities

Textiles Roadmap

The Textiles Roadmap is currently in development and on track for publication by the end of spring 2027. As for the other Roadmaps, draft interventions will be presented to the Roadmap Mission Board, comprised of sector representatives for agreement. Zero Waste Scotland has undertaken extensive research to inform the development of interventions, based on quantitative analysis of textile flows in, through and out of Scotland, and extensive stakeholder engagement to understand barriers and opportunities.

We conducted [our largest piece of research on textiles](#) in 2025 and have now produced three complementary reports. Together, they provide a detailed view of textiles material flow across the Scottish value chain, stakeholder insights to required policy interventions and analysis of potential measures that take account of

practicality, feasibility and impact. The focus of the work is primarily on clothing and household textiles.

In addition, and linked to textiles, is our [recent series of reports on unsold goods](#) which highlights the challenges businesses, supply chains, charities and policymakers face in understanding and managing surplus products.

While some interventions are specific to the textiles sector, similar themes emerge on cross-cutting measures to the other Roadmaps, including utilising procurement to embed circular economy practices, increasing the availability of sector skills, exploring finance mechanisms to embed circular practices, supporting measures for better design and durability of textile product, and improving the quality and quantity of material collected at end-of-life. The proposed interventions will involve actors across the supply chain and consider the most meaningful steps that can be taken for, and by, the Scottish sector.

Bioeconomy Roadmap

Like the Textiles Roadmap the Bioeconomy Roadmap is currently in development with a planned publication date of Spring 2027. The Roadmap will translate the Scottish Government's Life Sciences Strategy for Scotland 2035 vision into actionable circular economic outcomes ensuring strategic alignment. It will be further informed by forthcoming research on 'Advancing Scotland's Circular Bioeconomy' and updates to the 'Scottish Bioresource Mapping dataset'. These reports, set to be published in autumn 2026, will identify where biological by-products and residues could create greater environmental, social and economic value through innovation, resource efficiency and circular business models.

The Roadmap will follow the framework set out, working collaboratively to present draft interventions to the Roadmap Mission Board which will comprise representatives from across the bioeconomy sector. The interventions will be sector specific in addition to cross cutting measures including procurement, circular skills and identifying financial mechanisms to support investment.

It is also worth pointing out food and agriculture are generally considered a core part of the bioeconomy and are often viewed as the foundation of the bioeconomy. While separate to the Bioeconomy Roadmap Zero Waste Scotland is leading on the development of the Household Food Waste Intervention Plan for the Scottish Government as laid out in the Circular Economy and Waste Routemap to 2030. The plan will guide long term work on household food waste reduction behaviour change.

Last year Zero Waste Scotland published "[Food for Thought](#)" bringing together several pieces of research, as part of the development of the intervention plan. These publications covered the values and beliefs that affect why food is wasted, research on meal planning behaviours and how these can reduce waste and in-depth studies into how much food we waste and the reasons for it. Building on this research Zero Waste Scotland are engaging with stakeholders on the development of evidence led interventions which will form the intervention plan. Consideration of the impacts of the interventions is a critical step towards publication of the plan in 2027.

8. How are you working with other organisations to tackle these pollutants such as 'forever chemicals', microplastics and sewage-related contaminants in drinking water and water bodies and their upstream sources?

Water does not fall within Zero Waste Scotland's primary remit.

However, Zero Waste Scotland works closely with a range of organisations, including the Scottish Government, SEPA, local authorities, industry bodies and other stakeholders, to support efforts to better understand and manage the impacts of pollutants such as Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs), PFAS ("forever chemicals") and microplastics.

Our work has primarily focused on supporting partners to address the resource management implications of harmful substances in products and materials. For example, we have worked with SEPA, the Scottish Government and local authorities on issues relating to POPs in waste upholstered domestic seating, helping to gather operational evidence, identify implementation challenges and support communications and guidance development.

More broadly, we engage with research and policy discussions relating to problematic chemicals and materials through stakeholder forums and collaborative working groups. These discussions are helping to build understanding of the scale and prevalence of substances such as PFAS and microplastics within products, waste streams and the wider environment.

From a circular economy perspective, tackling these pollutants requires greater transparency around the materials and chemicals used in products, as well as stronger mechanisms to ensure producers take responsibility for the impacts and costs associated with products at end of life. Initiatives such as Digital Product Passports and Extended Producer Responsibility schemes have the potential to play an important role in addressing these challenges by improving information flows and incentivising the design of safer, more sustainable products.

9. What are the key obstacles to progress on water and climate resilience within the current legislative framework?

Water and climate resilience do not fall within Zero Waste Scotland's primary remit, and we have not undertaken specific analysis of the legislative framework relating to these areas. As such, we do not have a position on the key obstacles to progress within the current framework.