



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Climate Action Committee

Gillian Martin
Cabinet Secretary for Climate Action and Rural Affairs
Scottish Government

Hannah Mary Goodlad
Minister for Public Finance
Scottish Government

21 September 2026

Dear Gillian and Hannah Mary,

Inquiry into the environmental impacts of AI data centres

The Climate Action Committee has agreed to undertake an inquiry into the environmental impacts of AI data centres.

The Committee has agreed to write to you seeking details of the Programme for Government commitment to:

Publish a strategic approach to attracting and securing responsible green data centre investment in Scotland, with clear expectations around environmental sustainability, resource use, community benefit and the economic and strategic value these developments should deliver.

The Committee seeks details of the development of the strategic approach, including how stakeholders will be engaged, and what data sources will inform the “expectations around environmental sustainability” and “resource use”.

We also seek confirmation of the timescales for publication of this strategic approach and what status this will have.

The Committee also seeks details of:

- The timescales for creation of national planning and spatial guidance on the determination of conditions under which data centre development should be permitted;
- How stakeholders and the public will be involved in the development of national planning and spatial guidance;

Contact: Climate Action Committee, The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP.
Email climateaction.committee@parliament.scot. We welcome calls through Relay UK and in BSL through Contact Scotland BSL.

- How this will incorporate the resolution of Parliament that as a condition of planning approval “any proposals for data centres should demonstrate how they would minimise emissions for their energy usage and not impact on water usage and how community wealth benefit will be built into the business case”;
- How this will incorporate the call from the Scottish Parliament “to bring forward a clear definition of what constitutes a hyperscale data centre and to issue national planning guidance, alongside robust environmental standards and assessments, to inform national and local decision-making on current and potential hyperscale data centre planning applications.”
- Scottish Government plans (including timescales) to “...report back to Parliament on the development of national planning guidance by the end of the current calendar year and to publish this guidance in full within 12 months;
- The Government’s view on whether any “...decisions on planning or consenting in relation to such applications should be made until [development of full guidance] has been completed.”

On behalf of the Committee, I seek a response by Thursday 15 October 2026.

Yours sincerely,



Stuart McMillan MSP
Convener