



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Conveners Group

Martin Whitfield MSP
Convener
Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee

1 December 2025

Dear Martin,

Session 6 Strategic Priority on Net Zero Scrutiny: Progress report

At its meeting on 24 September 2025, the Conveners Group agreed to write to the Standards, Procedures & Public Appointments Committee to ask that it consider a Standing Orders rule change to require that policy memorandums for a Bill must state the effect, if any, the proposed legislation would have on the Scottish Government's statutory net zero targets.

I attach a copy of the [meeting paper](#) from the 24 September meeting where the item was discussed for ease of reference.

I would be grateful if you could keep the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee updated on your consideration of this request.

Yours sincerely

Liam McArthur MSP
Deputy Presiding Officer
Convener of the Conveners Group

Conveners Group
Wednesday 24 September 2025
5th Meeting, 2025 (Session 6)

Session 6 Strategic Priority on Net Zero Scrutiny: Progress Report

Introduction

1. This paper updates the Conveners Group on progress being made in taking forward agreed actions as part of its strategic priority on net zero scrutiny. The last update was in [June 2024](#).

Context

2. Climate change (the issue) and net zero (a policy response) are complex scientific, socio-economic and environmental issues, and so require whole society consideration. In [June 2022](#) CG discussed and agreed seven actions:



3. CG agreed that the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee (NZET) Committee plays the lead scrutiny role, which includes supporting other committees in embedding climate scrutiny in their work.
4. The Scottish Parliamentary Service (SPS) is tasked with supporting delivery of these actions, in the context of wider support for MSPs, their staff and staff of the Parliament. This helps the Parliament meet its own statutory public duties on climate change and sustainable development, summarised in the [Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body Sustainable Development Annual Report](#).

Update on Conveners Group agreed actions

5. Progress on Conveners Group's seven agreed actions are listed briefly below. Where progress is marked Amber, more detailed information is provided in the next section. Where progress is marked as Green, further information is in [Annexe A](#).

Strategic priority	Status	Comment
1. UK Climate Change Committee (CCC) to be invited to the Conveners Group on annual basis	Green	The 2024 session was postponed due to recruitment of a new CCC Chief Executive. Now scheduled for 24 September 2025. There is ongoing official level contact (including visits) and collaboration between CCC and SPS staff.
2. Commission research on climate change and net zero related to committee remits	Green	Between June 2024 and July 2025, ten blogs or briefings on specific devolved policy areas published, along with two "cross-cutting" blogs on climate change and aspects of devolution. Of these, six blogs gathered expertise from outside the SPS in order to diversify the evidence base. These will be used regularly in SPICe briefings for committees and publications for Members
3. Ask Scottish Government for emissions data by committee portfolio	Amended	As agreed by Conveners Group in June 2024, emissions data by committee portfolio has been considered as part of the commissioned research (action point 2); whilst continuing to explore other options with potential external partners.
4. Consider ways to strengthen parliamentary processes	Amber	The NZET and Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committees have exchanged ideas about strengthening requirements for information on climate change provided in Policy Memos accompanying Bills. Cabinet Secretary Martin recently indicated Scottish Government position of neutrality on such a change.
5. Climate change / net zero adviser as shared committee resource	Green	Dr Kirsten Jenkins, University of Edinburgh is available to support committees. Has so far supported Economy and Fair Work, Local Government, Housing and Planning,

		Public Audit and Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committees, alongside NZET Committee.
6. Continued rollout of Sustainable Development Impact Assessment (SDIA) Tool	Amber	Guidance has been developed for SPS staff on Sustainable Development scrutiny and the SDIA Tool. This includes explainers, templates, and supporting resources. A SPICe Snippet on Using the SDIA Tool for Scrutiny was delivered in May 2025. Training to become SDIA Tool facilitators has been delivered to 19 participants (14 in scrutiny, 5 in operations).
7. Capacity building for MSPs, their staff and staff of the Parliament	Green	A variety of resources, activities and learning have been made available to MSPs, their staff and SPS staff to support scrutiny of climate change across different areas of work. Current focus includes adapting and receiving accreditation to roll out Carbon Literacy training across the Parliament.

Actions points not in green

Ask Scottish Government for emissions data by committee portfolio (action point 3)

6. In June 2024, CG noted that the Scottish Government would not commit to providing data in this way. It agreed instead to ask SPICe to work on detailing emissions data by committee portfolio, as part of its work commissioning research (action point 2).
7. SPICe has continued to detail emissions data in the blogs on climate change and net zero related to committee remits and use narrative and available data to indicate the relevance of net zero to portfolio areas where emissions are not substantive. At the same time, officials have continued to explore other options with potential external partners.

Consider ways to strengthen parliamentary processes (action point 4)

8. There was an exchange of correspondence between CG and the SPPA Committee in 2023, with an initial suggestion of amending Standing Orders to require the Scottish Government to provide information necessary to support commitments to deliver against climate change challenges and net zero targets in certain situations (e.g. when lodging a Bill).

9. The SPPA Committee then wrote to the NZET Committee asking for its views on what type of information should be made available in Policy Memoranda to support scrutiny of the net zero impact of legislation. As the NZET Committee had not yet considered any primary legislation, it decided to use the Circular Economy (Scotland) Bill as a test case. To complement this work, and ensure a broader base of analysis, clerks and SPICe also undertook desk-based research, considering the quality of information on net zero currently being provided in Policy Memoranda, in five Scottish Government Bills introduced over the previous 8 years. NZET wrote to the SPPA Committee in [April 2024](#) to share its findings and suggest next steps.

10. NZET concluded that it was not in a position to provide an authoritative response, as more dialogue and evidence-gathering would be needed. However, NZET strongly suggested keeping on the table the option of amending Standing Orders so as to impose a more specific requirement about the information to be provided in relation to the estimated carbon emission impact of new legislation.

11. In the meantime, NZET recommended that there should be dialogue with the SG about improving the consistency and depth of information they provide to the Parliament on the net zero impact of newly introduced legislation, so as to encourage them to “show their working”.

12. In [April 2025, NZET responded to the SPPA inquiry on Committee Effectiveness](#). As part of its response, NZET noted that committee effectiveness could be enhanced by improving the quality of information on climate change and net zero in Policy Memorandums, potentially strengthening net zero scrutiny of Bills and suggested that SPPA could consider this further in light of this inquiry.

13. On [9 September 2025](#), as part of its scrutiny of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 (Scottish Carbon Budgets) Amendment Regulations 2025, the NZET Committee asked the Cabinet Secretary for Climate Action and Energy about progress on the Government’s net zero assessment pilot and whether the Government would support an amendment to Standing Orders to require information about the emissions impact of the legislation to be provided in the policy memorandum. The Cabinet Secretary [responded](#):

“I do not have a fixed view on that. It is for the Parliament to decide what it wants to do in that regard. There has been a lot of movement on the budgeting process and the carbon assessment that is associated with it. That is internal Government work to flesh out the impacts of what we are doing. It is for the Parliament to decide what it wants to do in that space.”

Continued rollout of Sustainable Development Impact Assessment (SDIA) Tool (action point 6)

14. The Scottish Parliament has produced a [Sustainable Development Impact Assessment \(SDIA\) tool](#), to support Members to scrutinise legislation and policy through a sustainable development lens. It can also be used with officials only to strengthen the briefing support made available to Committees.

15. The tool is discursive and requires users to talk through the implications of any given piece of policy or legislation together, with the support of a facilitator, to unpack and gain a deeper understanding of the matter under consideration. Use of the SDIA tool can strengthen scrutiny, by supporting cross-committee working, highlighting potential unintended or negative consequences of legislation or policy, and broadening the range of witnesses and evidence.
16. CG noted in June 2024 that evaluation suggested that more work was needed to refine the approach to the rollout of the SDIA tool for scrutiny, including work to increase Members' and officials' awareness and engagement with the Tool, alignment with scrutiny processes and access to facilitators.
17. Since then, SPS guidance has been developed for Sustainable Development scrutiny and the SDIA tool. This was made available in January 2025 and includes explainers, templates, case studies and supporting resources. A SPICE Snippet on Using the SDIA tool for Scrutiny was delivered in May 2025. Training to become SDIA Tool facilitators was also developed and delivered to 19 participants (14 in scrutiny, 5 in operations) in May to June 2025.
18. Researchers at St Andrews University have been asked to undertake a review of the SDIA Tool. The outcomes will be used to inform next steps about its use in scrutiny in Session 7. Staff are aiming to deliver a further three SDIA workshops in scrutiny before the end of Session 6, to inform considerations about its use in Session 7.

Recommendation

19. **Conveners Group is invited to note the update and offer views on:**

- **whether the commissioned research (action point 2) provide a sufficient overview of the linkages between committee portfolios and climate, or whether any further work to provide emissions data by committee portfolio (action point 3) is required?**
- **potential ways to progress work on the quality of information the Scottish Government provide on net zero in relation to legislation.**
- **whether they are content for rollout of the SDIA Tool across scrutiny for the remainder of Session 6 to focus on staff engagement, to inform considerations about its use in Session 7.**

Additional activities to build capacity and capability

20. As well as continuing to deliver on the specific Conveners Group actions, staff have been undertaking additional activities to continue to build a model for parliamentary scrutiny of climate change and net zero.

21. A key part of the wider model is the partnership with the [UK Research and Innovation Economic and Social Research Council](#) (UKRI-ESRC) and the Universities of Edinburgh, Glasgow, Strathclyde and Stirling, to fund a dedicated post to develop diverse networks with academics across Scotland, the UK and

globally. This has enhanced institutional support to Members to access diverse research evidence and expertise to support scrutiny of climate change.

22. Highlights from this and other key strands of activity to build capacity and capabilities, undertaken as part of the wider model, are provided in [Annexe B](#).

Approaches taken by committees to scrutinise climate change and net zero in response to the CG strategic priority

23. While the NZET Committee has a lead responsibility here, Conveners Group has recognised the cross-cutting nature of net zero scrutiny and that it engages the remits of all parliamentary committees. The overarching objective of this workstream is to find ways to embed net zero scrutiny within the work of all committees.

24. Conveners Group are reminded of the enhanced resource available to support committees to embed consideration of climate change and net zero into their scrutiny work, and to enhance and diversify engagement with academic evidence and expertise on climate change.

26. A key focus for this resource to the end of Session 6 will be on supporting cross-cutting scrutiny of the upcoming draft Climate Change Plan (CCP, see separate CG paper for 24 September). A framework of support is now available to all committees to support their work in this area.

Type of support	Rationale for support	Availability
Private briefing by Specialist Adviser on net zero/ SPICe subject researchers/ SPICe Knowledge Exchange Manager in Climate Change Scrutiny to any committee	To facilitate access to internal expertise on how the CCP relates to the committee's remit; discussion on approaches to scrutiny of the CCP; to develop and deliver activities to extend and diversify use of research evidence and academic expertise in relation to the CCP; and bespoke support available.	Available now
Background briefing for Committees	To provide an overview of the CCP and support committees to take a structured approach to discussing the CCP	Available now [see separate CG paper for 24 September]
Public SPICe hub of research on Climate change and Scottish	To set out the relevance of climate change and net zero across different policy areas. This now includes 15 blogs and briefings covering the remits of 10 different committees as well as 2 cross-cutting	Available now

<u>Parliament committees</u>	blogs on the division between devolved and reserved powers and responsibilities relevant to tackling climate change.	
SPICe analysis of Call for Views	To inform scrutiny across committees.	October 2025
Public SPICe briefings/blogs on key areas of CCP	To provide an overview of the draft CCP and in-depth analysis of the key issues for scrutiny; and inform public debate.	November 2025 onwards
SPICe breakfast seminar series on CCP	To highlight key issues in the main chapters of the CCP; facilitate access to internal and external expertise; and provide a forum for discussion.	November 2025 onwards; the full programme is under development and suggestions are welcomed
SPICe- <u>Scotland Beyond Net Zero</u> (SBNZ) policy-research conference	To bring together researchers from across the SBNZ academic community who have expertise relevant to key themes in the CCP with research and clerking colleagues involved in supporting Members' scrutiny of the CCP.	24 November 2025

25. Conveners are encouraged to contact the Senior Analyst in Climate Change Scrutiny, Dr Abbi Hobbs (abbi.hobbs@parliament.scot, 0131 348 5251) or the Knowledge Exchange Manager - Climate Change Scrutiny, Dr Dan Barlow (dan.barlow@parliament.scot, 0131 348 5563) to discuss support available.

Recommendation

26. **Conveners Group is invited to offer views on:**

- **what activities they would like staff supporting delivery of this work to prioritise up to the end of Session 6 to best support committees to embed climate scrutiny in their work.**
- **what has worked well in terms of supporting committees to embed climate scrutiny into their work - and what the challenges have been - to inform legacy considerations for CG and for individual committees.**

Conveners Group clerking team
September 2025

Annexe A: Conveners Group agreed actions for Net Zero scrutiny from June 2023 to June 2024

27. Please note, the below provides an update for those actions that are currently categorised as on track (green). Actions that are not currently categorised as green status are reported in the main body, see [Action points not in green](#).

UK Climate Change Committee (CCC) to be invited to the Conveners Group on annual basis (action point 1)

28. See separate CG paper for 24 September for more on this action point.

Commission research on climate change and net zero related to committee remits (action point 2)

29. SPICe has published a [hub blog on Climate change and Scottish Parliament committees](#), with 15 blogs covering the remits of 10 committees:

- [Climate change and the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee – Climate policy governance](#) (January 2024)
- [Climate change and the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee – Sectors](#) (January 2024)
- [Climate change and the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee](#) (January 2024)
- [Climate change and the Economy and Fair Work Committee](#) (July 2024)
- [Climate change and the Education, Children and Young People Committee – Policy, curriculum, professional learning and climate anxiety](#) (July 2024)
- [Climate change and the Education, Children and Young People Committee – Education estate, post-school education, research and engagement](#) (July 2024)
- [Climate Change and the Rural Affairs and Islands Committee – Rural Land Use](#) (July 2024)
- [Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee – human rights, procedural rights and differential impacts](#) (February 2025)
- [Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee – climate change litigation and the operation of the civil justice system](#) (February 2025)
- [Climate change and the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee – Arts and Culture](#) (April 2025)
- [Climate change and the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee – International development and climate justice](#) (May 2025).

- [Climate change and the Finance and Public Administration Committee](#) (June 2025)
- [Climate change and the Public Audit Committee](#) (June 2025)
- [Health, Social Care and Sport Committee – Climate change and health: what are the co-benefits of climate action?](#) (July 2025)
- [Health, Social Care and Sport Committee - Links between climate change and health in Scotland](#) - briefing (July 2025).

30. There are also two guest blogs on the division between devolved and reserved powers and responsibilities for the matters relevant to tackling climate change.

- [The climate jigsaw part one: the general framework of devolution and climate change](#) (June 2025)
- [The climate jigsaw part two: sectoral issues in devolution and climate change](#) (June 2025).

31. These were published by a combination of SPICe staff, Committee Adviser's and the Knowledge Exchange Manager in Climate Change Scrutiny trialling different approaches to gather diverse evidence and expertise from outside the SPS (Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee; Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee [international development and climate justice]; and Health, Social Care and Sport Committee).

32. This research will be used regularly in SPICe briefings for committees and publications for Members.

Climate change / net zero adviser as shared committee resource (action point 5)

33. A new adviser, Dr Kirsten Jenkins, was recruited in January 2024 (following Dr Dan Barlow stepping down in October 2023 to take up the role of Knowledge Exchange Manager – Climate Change Scrutiny). Dr Jenkins is available, alongside SPICe, to talk to individual conveners or committees at any point.

34. As well as supporting NZETs work programme, Dr Jenkins has assisted the Economy and Fair Work, Local Government and Housing, Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture (CEEAC), and Public Audit Committees. This includes input to Business Planning Days, briefings and work programme discussions and provision of research expertise. Dr Jenkins also wrote a blog on the relevance of climate change to the remit of the CEEAC Committee, focused on international development and climate justice (action point 2).

35. Dr Jenkins is working with SPICe and clerks to support a strategic approach to scrutiny of the CCP.

Capacity building for MSPs, their staff and staff of the Parliament (action point 7)

36. A variety of resources, activities and learning have been made available to MSPs, their staff and SPS staff to support scrutiny of climate change across different areas of work. This includes specific additional resource for bespoke on-demand tailored support, as well as events, seminars, workshops and structured learning. The approach taken has been informed by a mapping exercise of existing internal and external learning activities related to climate change and sustainable development, to identify gaps in provision and maximise use of resources.

37. Since June 2024, staff have delivered 4 SPICe Seminars and 4 SPICe Snippets. Staff have also supported the establishment of the Scottish Parliament's own [Climate Café](#), which launched in August 2024, and runs monthly on the estate for all passholders. Through other teams, MSPs, their staff and SPS staff also have access to 11 e-learning modules, including the Royal Scottish Geographical Society Climate Solutions course (through the Sustainability Team), and 2 online courses by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (through the International Relations Office).

38. Project staff have also supported CPD for SPS staff supporting Committees - to strengthen the support they provide to Members.

39. A table showing the breakdown of activities delivered between June 2024 to September 2025 for action 7 is provided below.

40. To improve the communication of CPD resources, a Sharepoint Hub has been developed for the Sustainable Development Programme (which includes a workstream on scrutiny). Work is also underway with colleagues in Learning and Development about how to best include and communicate content in the Parliament's new 'My Learning' system.

41. Future focus includes adapting accredited [Carbon Literacy](#) training for use across the Scottish Parliament, including ensuring relevance for scrutiny. To support this, in March and April 2025 two members of staff undertook training to become accredited to deliver Carbon Literacy workshops. Staff are also involved in discussions about how to best support MSPs following the election.

42. There are additional activities that could be undertaken to further deliver against this action and the Conveners Group parallel strategic priority on enhancing CPD opportunities for Members. These include:

- hearing from the Scottish Fiscal Commission on their analysis on the costs to the Scottish Government of reaching net zero

test and explore the impact of different policies - such as electrifying transport, carbon capture and storage and improving agricultural practices - have on net zero, using a simulator tool called [En-ROADS](#), developed by Climate Interactive, MIT Sloan, and Ventana Systems.

Breakdown of activities delivered between June 2024 to September 2025 for Action 7 - capacity building for MSPs, their staff and staff of the Parliament to support scrutiny of climate change

Type of support	Other information	Format
Staff resources available to MSPs, their staff and SPS staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SPICE subject researchers Adviser on climate change and net zero (who works with the NZET Committee, as well as other committees to support them to embed climate change scrutiny in their own work) Knowledge Exchange Manager – Climate Change Scrutiny (who works to improve the availability of relevant research to MSPs, including improved academic engagement) Senior Analyst – Climate Change Scrutiny (who supports delivery of Conveners Group strategic priority) Project Manager (who provides focused project management support to the Conveners Group as part of the Scrutiny Pillar of the wider Sustainable Development Programme) Two strategic leads for the Conveners Group strategic priority on climate change and net zero (Head of Research and Sustainable Development Scrutiny, SPICE, and clerk to the NZET Committee) 	MSPs, MSP staff and SPS staff In-person or remote, on demand
<u>SPICE seminars</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An introduction to Environmental Standards Scotland: Scotland's environmental watchdog (June 2025) Links between Health, Social Care and Climate Change (May 2025) 'Dark Oxygen' Discovery: Implications for Marine Science, the Origins of Life and Deep Seabed Mining (April 2025) Scotland's Changing Electricity System: Ask the Experts Seminar (October 2024) 	MSPs, MSP staff and SPS staff In-person, scheduled
<u>SPICE Snippets</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carbon Budgets and the Climate Change Plan (June 2025) SPICE Snippet: Using the Sustainable Development Impact Assessment (SDIA) tool in scrutiny (May 2025) Areas of Research Interest (ARIs) – a mechanism to broaden, deepen, and diversify the research evidence available to committees (October 2024) 	MSPs, MSP staff and SPS staff Hybrid, scheduled

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate Change Targets Bill (September 2024) 	
Institute of Advanced Legal Studies/ Westminster Foundation for Democracy course on Post-Legislative Scrutiny in the context of the climate and environmental emergency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is a new course aimed at Members of Parliaments, researchers, and committee staff of parliaments worldwide, particularly of committees leading on environmental and climate policy. The objectives are to provide an in-depth exploration of the theory and practice of post-legislative scrutiny (PLS) as an oversight tool. The course adopts a holistic outlook that places PLS in the legislative cycle and delves into the practice of PLS piloting and innovations over the last few years. 7 staff across SPICe and clerking undertook the course in September 2024. 	SPS staff (could be made available to MSPs and MSP staff) Online, scheduled
Scottish Parliament Climate Café	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During the Festival of Politics in August 2024, the Scottish Parliament hosted its first Climate Climate Café in the Parliament for everyone. Since August, staff have supported a monthly Climate Café open to all passholders. This drop-in style event is an opportunity for the Members and SPS staff to come together and chat about the Climate Crisis and learn from each other. Themes have included biodiversity and transport. 	MSPs, MSP staff and SPS staff In-person, scheduled
Cross-legislature climate and environment collaboration workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop organised by the Scottish Parliament and held at UK Parliament in October 2024 to facilitate networking and collaboration among ~50 colleagues from the four UK legislatures working in climate and environment to share knowledge, best practices, and foster future partnerships. 	SPS staff In-person, scheduled
Engagement events with climate researchers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two events held with academic partners (University of Glasgow and University of Stirling) to bring together climate researchers (c. 80 in total) with Scottish Parliament research and clerking staff to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Share and learn more about relevant research expertise available ○ Discuss engagement opportunities. • These have triggered subsequent engagement between SPICe researchers and academics including 1:1 meetings and invitations to present. 	SPS staff In-person, scheduled
SDIA Tool Facilitator training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training to become SDIA Tool facilitators was developed and delivered in May and June 2025 to 19 participants (14 in scrutiny, 5 in operations). 	SPS staff In-person, scheduled

House of Commons Climate and Environment Policy Hub CPD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Briefing with the Climate Change Committee on the 7th Carbon Budget (March 2025) • Briefing with the Equality and Human Rights Commission and Office of Environmental Protection on Scrutinising the Incorporation of Equality, Human Rights and Environmental Considerations into Government Policy (June 2025) 	SPS staff Hybrid, scheduled
Sustainability team e-learning modules on Learning Pool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biodiversity • Circular Economy • Climate Solutions/ Royal Scottish Geographical Society • Conscious Consumerism • Food and Food Waste • Protecting Our Water Resources • Sustainable Living • Travel and Transportation 	MSPs, MSP staff and SPS staff Online, self-paced
Sustainability team e-learning on Sharepoint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable Development Induction • Climate Justice • Circular Economy 	MSPs, MSP staff and SPS staff Online, self-paced
CPA course on Parliamentary Action on Climate Change in Small Jurisdictions .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This course explores the basics of climate change and how it impacts small jurisdictions in particular. It focuses on the science of climate change, disaster risk management and the importance of international frameworks. In addition, it looks at how to mitigate against and adapt to the effects of climate change as well how to engage with the local community. 	MSPs, MSP staff and SPS staff. Online, self-paced
CPA course on The Sustainable Development Goals: A Parliament's Role .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The objectives of this course are to develop knowledge of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the crucial role of Parliaments, as institutions, in implementing the SDGs. The material examines parliamentary action on three levels of implementation: local/constituency, national, and international implementation. It also seeks to highlight how parliaments can work with key stakeholders to promote the SDGs and influence real change within communities. The course delves into key methods of SDG financing, drawing on case studies and positive examples from the Commonwealth and beyond. 	Individual MSP, MSP staff or SPS staff Online, self-paced

Annexe B: Update on wider activities to build capacity and capability from June 2024 to September 2025

Innovating processes to enhance Members' access to the best available diverse research evidence and expertise on climate change

Support and advice to clerking and SPICe colleagues on the relevance of climate change and net zero across committee portfolios/ areas of work and opportunities to draw on academic expertise to support effective scrutiny on climate.

Trialling adaptations to existing knowledge exchange processes, to enhance and diversify engagement. This includes using the Scottish Parliament Academic Network (SPAN) to solicit research and expertise for Committee and other parliamentary work, including in relation to scrutiny of the Natural Environment Bill by the Rural Affairs and Islands Committee.

Diversifying use of evidence and experts in the production of research on the relevance of climate change to the policy areas across subject committees. This includes using the SPAN network to solicit research and expertise to support the development of blogs highlighting links between the remit of the Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee and climate change. It also includes co-production with an academic via the academic fellowship scheme, for the research for the Health, Social Care & Sport Committee. This resulted in the production of a blog, SPICe briefing and organisation of a breakfast seminar focused on the links between health and climate change.

Piloting new knowledge exchange tools, including Areas of Research Interest (ARIs) to support scrutiny of climate change/ net zero through making it easier for the research community to engage with the Parliament and to get more diverse evidence from a wider range of people. ARIs are a mechanism for an organisation to express interest in seeing more research evidence in a specific area and/or to understand what research expertise exists of relevance to a particular policy issue. The Parliament launched the [pilot of ARIs in March 2025](#), covering:

- Climate emissions from waste management and resource use
- Understanding the Regional and Sectoral Employment Implications of a Just Transition.

These ARIs closed on 6 June 2025. There were 47 responses, with 60% of responses from those new to engaging with the Scottish Parliament. The ARIs are being used to identify relevant research and expertise, to inform research briefings prepared by SPICe, questions or issues that committees may wish to consider, and to identify potential expert witnesses. Staff continue to have regular discussions with the Scottish Government, UK Parliament and Senedd and the Universities Policy Engagement Network (UPEN) to share learnings and good practice.

Building academic capacity on policy engagement through presentations to over 175 academics and knowledge exchange professionals, including the Universities Policy

Engagement Network, the University of Edinburgh Policy Engagement Network and at events for climate researchers at the University of Glasgow and University of Stirling.

Ongoing work to ensure adaptations to or innovative knowledge exchange processes are compliant with GDPR and data protection requirements.

Work to review existing monitoring processes for academic engagement, including on diversity, and to establish a baseline for reporting and evaluation, including introducing approaches to monitor the diversity of those responding to ARI requests.

Support to collaborate more strategically with public and charitable sector research funders on climate change, including ESRC and interdisciplinary UKRI-funded investments and Higher Education Institutes (HEIs). Including work to map sources of research expertise across the UK relevant to net zero, relevant UKRI investments, and building relationships with key stakeholders, including the Scottish Policy Research Exchange.

Strengthening connections between the Scottish Parliament and strategic partners on climate change

Staff supporting the strategic priority have been strengthening strategic relationships with key independent public bodies that provide evidence-based assessments, including [Audit Scotland](#) (AS), the [Scottish Fiscal Commission](#) (SFC), [Environmental Standards Scotland](#) (ESS) - as well as the Climate Change Committee (CCC) (action point 1). They have also been strengthening strategic relationships with key research stakeholders, including the partnership funders - [UKRI-ESRC](#) and the four HEIs in Scotland that hold UKRI-ESRC Impact Acceleration Account (IAA) funding (the Universities of Edinburgh, Glasgow, Strathclyde and Stirling) - and key research-policy networks, including [UPEN](#).

In addition to the CCC (action point 1), AS, SFC and ESS have provided evidence to the NZET Committee in relation to climate change and net zero.

To support the Parliament's scrutiny of the draft CCP, in February 2025, the NZET Committee wrote to the CCC, AS, ESS, and the SFC to ask them to set out what a 'good' CCP would look like. Their full responses are linked below:

- [Climate Change Committee response](#)
- [Audit Scotland response](#)
- [Environmental Standards Scotland response](#)
- [Scottish Fiscal Commission response](#)

The NZET Committee highlighted this work to other Committees in [correspondence in February 2025](#). In April 2025, the [NZET Committee shared a SPICe summary and the full responses with the Acting Cabinet Secretary](#), and encouraged the Government to consider this advice and engage with these bodies in preparing the

draft CCP. In evidence to the NZET Committee on [9 September 2025](#), the Cabinet Secretary for Climate Action and Energy stated that:

“We have already had a very useful letter from the committee on some of the responses that it has had, with links to the consultation responses. We are already looking at and following up on those.”

There are regular quarterly meetings between AS, SPICe and clerking on climate change and net zero and there has been formal [correspondence between the NZET Committee and the Public Audit Committee](#) on the Auditor General for Scotland (AGS) draft work programme for the AGS to March 2026 and priorities for 2026/27 and beyond.

A SPICe seminar on ‘An introduction to Environmental Standards Scotland: Scotland’s environmental watchdog’ was held in June 2025, chaired by Sarah Boyack MSP.

Staff have continued to have regular meetings with UKRI-ESRC on the partnership with the Scottish Parliament and with the four IAA partners, who have regularly attended project meetings in the Scottish Parliament. Joint seminars at both the University of Glasgow and the University of Stirling have also been hosted to bring together researchers involved in climate work with SPICe and clerking colleagues to discuss engagement opportunities.

Staff have engaged closely with UPEN, a UK-wide network of organisations who support the use of academic expertise and evidence on public policymaking. This includes participating in, and presenting at, their network events. SPICe also provided a letter of support for UPEN’s successful bid for £5.9 million from UKRI to increase and develop their capacity, including additional funds from ESRC to support devolved engagement.

Piloting processes to enhance public engagement and participation

To support parallel strategic priorities in post-legislative scrutiny and Parliament’s use of deliberative democracy, Conveners Group agreed in 2024 for a People’s Panel to be established to support NZET’s post-legislative scrutiny of section 91 of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009. The NZET Committee has continued to use the work of the [People’s Panel on Climate Change](#) to support its work.

This includes informing its scrutiny of the [Climate Change \(Emissions Reduction Targets\) \(Scotland\) Bill](#) and its [pre-Budget scrutiny 2025-2026 work](#).

In March 2025, SPICe published a blog on [Delivering a model for parliamentary scrutiny of climate change: a Climate Change People’s Panel](#), assessing the impact from the Panel a year on.

In May 2025, the [Scottish Government responded in full to the NZET Committee on the Panel’s 17 recommendations](#) and stated that the Panel’s report and recommendations were an important source of evidence for the Government’s [mid-point progress review of its Public Engagement Strategy for Climate Change](#), published in April 2025.

Learning from this People's Panel was used to inform the development of the [Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee blueprint for embedding deliberative democracy in the work of the Scottish Parliament](#), published in May 2025. It was also used to inform the [independent evaluation of the Scottish Parliament's use of People's Panel](#), as well as internal cross-team work to develop an impact tracking framework for future People's Panels.

NZET will continue to use the Panel's work to inform its scrutiny and to support the work of other committees, for example, in relation to the draft Climate Change Plan.

Activities to raise awareness of relevance of climate change and engagement with it across parliamentary work

In addition to the activities undertaken as part of the seven action points, staff supporting the strategic priority have contributed support to integrate climate change and net zero to other areas of scrutiny. This includes in relation to the Good Food Nation Plan and the Wellbeing and Sustainable Development (Scotland) Bill, and regular meetings with the legal team.

Staff have also supported corporate programmes and teams outwith the parliamentary business Directorate to embed considerations on climate change and sustainable development. This includes:

- SPICe support to the 'Parliament of the Future' Programme to inform the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body's Session 7 strategy (June 2024 ongoing).
- Presentations to the Senior Executive Team (SET) on the work of the Parliament's Sustainable Development Programme (SDP), which includes a Scrutiny Pillar (December 2024 and March 2025).
- Data collection and analysis for a resource review by SET of the SDP (January to June 2025).

Staff have also applied learnings from the work to date to strengthen internal processes and ways of working to support effective scrutiny across policy areas. This includes:

- SPICe all-staff day on challenges and opportunities for SPICe (March 2025)
- Participation in subsequent SPICe working group on induction and CPD (May 2025 ongoing)
- Scotland's Futures Forum, analysis of call for future topics (May 2025)
- Participation in the new Colleague Engagement Forum (July 2025 onwards).

Support to coordinate activities on climate change and ensure effective communication

Supporting cross-parliament communication on climate change and net zero issues and scrutiny approaches, including through official to official, convener to convenor, and committee to Scottish Government communications.

This has been focused on changes to climate change primary legislation, through the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2024, and preparatory scrutiny work on the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 (Scottish Carbon Budgets) Amendment Regulations 2025 and the subsequent statutory draft CCP.

Activities to share learnings and best practice

This includes activities to reciprocally share learnings and best practice, key highlights are set out below.

SPICe blog on [Delivering a model for parliamentary scrutiny of climate change: a Climate Change People's Panel](#) (March 2025).

Briefing support on the Conveners Group strategic priority on climate change and related work to International Relations Office supported inward and outward visits including Artic Circle Assembly, Nordic Council Session and Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Conference.

Continued close collaboration with the UK Parliament and other devolved legislatures to support the pilot of [Thematic Research Leads \(TRLs\)](#), funded by the UKRI-ESRC to strengthen networks and connections with the wider research community, and the other Knowledge Exchange Manager ESRC-funded positions in the Senedd and Northern Ireland Assembly. This has included a presentation as part of the TRLs induction programme at the UK Parliament about academic engagement and the Scottish Parliament, one of the TRLs being invited to give evidence to the Scottish Parliament Support Bodies Landscape Review Committee and hosting a visit by three TRLs to the Scottish Parliament in May 2025.

Presentation on the Conveners Group strategic priority on climate change at the CPA Small Branches Workshop on Environmental Resilience (July 2024).

Materials and presentation for participants of the global Institute of Advanced Legal Studies/ Westminster Foundation for Democracy course on Post-Legislative Scrutiny in the context of the climate and environmental emergency (September 2024).

Cross-legislature workshop on climate and environment to facilitate networking and collaboration among ~50 colleagues from the four UK legislatures working in climate and environment to share knowledge, best practices, and foster future partnerships (October 2024).

Workshop on Diversity of Evidence at the Inter Parliamentary Research and Information Network (October 2024).

Presentation to and participation in United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia meeting on Public Policy Making and Evaluation for Sustainable Development (February 2025).

Presentation to a delegation from the National Assembly of Zambia to the Scottish Parliament on Post Legislative Scrutiny and climate change (April 2025).

Meetings with other legislatures and organisations supporting scrutiny to share learnings, including: UK Parliament, Senedd, Northern Ireland Assembly, CPA, Inter-Parliamentary Union, AGORA Parliamentary Development Community of Practice.