



OFFICIAL REPORT
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee

Tuesday 16 September 2025

Session 6



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Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

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NET ZERO, ENERGY AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

27th Meeting 2025, Session 6

CONVENER

Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands) (Con)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Michael Matheson (Falkirk West) (SNP)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Bob Doris (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)

*Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab)

*Douglas Lumsden (North East Scotland) (Con)

*Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)

*Kevin Stewart (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)

*attended

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Peter McGrath

LOCATION

The Mary Fairfax Somerville Room (CR2)

Scottish Parliament

Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee

Tuesday 16 September 2025

[The Convener opened the meeting at 09:37]

Decision on Taking Business in Private

The Convener (Edward Mountain): Good morning, and welcome to the 27th meeting in 2025 of the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee.

Our first item of business is a decision on taking business in private. Does the committee agree to take in private item 4, which is consideration of a draft report on the Planning and Infrastructure Bill supplementary legislative consent memorandum, and item 5, which is consideration of the evidence that we received on the Climate Change (Scotland) Bill 2009 (Scottish Carbon Budgets) Amendment Regulations 2025?

Members indicated agreement.

Subordinate Legislation

Vehicle Emissions Trading Schemes (Amendment) Order 2025 (SI 2025/678)

09:37

The Convener: Our next item of business is consideration of a statutory instrument. The order has been laid under the negative procedure, which means that it will come into force unless the Parliament agrees a motion to annul it. No such motion has been lodged, and the Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee has made no comment on the order.

Before we go on to consider the order itself, I want to make a comment on the accompanying policy note. It seems to assume certain pre-existing technical knowledge. For example, there are references to “EU values” and “UK values” with regard to trading; there is no further explanation of the terms, and I am not entirely clear what they mean. It is very important to me as a parliamentarian that policy notes are understandable—they should be understandable to any member of the public who wants to know what an instrument does, and they should be understandable when parliamentarians are being asked to agree to instruments.

The policy note also uses greenhouse gas statistics from 2019 although, as I have been informed by the Scottish Parliament information centre, the 2023 figures have been available since June. Furthermore, the policy note refers to being “carbon neutral by 2040”. That might well be a specific policy commitment in a particular area, but a little more context to clarify that would have been helpful and welcome to me as somebody considering the instrument.

That said, do members have any comments? If not, I invite the committee to agree that it does not wish to make any recommendation in relation to the instrument. Are we agreed?

Members indicated agreement.

Petition

Air Quality Standards (PE2123)

09:39

The Convener: Our third item of business is consideration of petition PE2123, which has been submitted by Asthma and Lung UK Scotland and asks the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to amend the Air Quality Standards (Scotland) Regulations 2010. The petitioner wants new limits to be set for nitrogen dioxide and fine particulate matter in order to align with the World Health Organization's 2021 air quality targets.

The committee first considered the petition in April, and we agreed to write to the Scottish Government for an update on its review of the second cleaner air for Scotland strategy. The Scottish Government responded on 22 April; and when we considered the petition again, on 13 May, we agreed to write to stakeholders who responded to our 2023 air quality report, along with a few other interested parties, highlighting the Scottish Government's response and seeking their views.

Paper 2 sets out some options for further scrutiny, which include writing to the Government and closing the petition, if we consider that appropriate. Do members have any views on what has been suggested in the paper?

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): The committee has done very good work on this issue over a number of years, and I think that writing back to the stakeholders who responded to our original 2023 inquiry has brought us up to date.

I am a bit concerned that the regulations in Scotland are continuing to fall behind the best evidence that we have of the health impacts of air quality, which we know are substantial; the fact that we are not keeping pace with European Union standards is a concern. I note that the Scottish Government will look at all of this when it comes to revise its air quality strategy in the next year, but it is worth our writing to the Government now, asking it to adopt the WHO guidance, which is based on the best health evidence, and reflecting that in regulation. I note that the Scottish Environment Protection Agency—our environmental regulator—and Environmental Standards Scotland back that approach, as do many of the people who responded to our recent call for evidence.

Therefore, I am content for us to draw a line under the petition now and close it, following a letter to the Government urging it to adopt the WHO limits and to consider the steps for doing that in its next cleaner air for Scotland strategy.

Kevin Stewart (Aberdeen Central) (SNP): I agree with the vast bulk of what Mark Ruskell has just said. However, we are, as he has said, not up to speed with all the technicalities of implementation. The letter should ask that adopting the WHO standards be considered, and we should ask the Government to provide updates to this committee and its successor, so that we can see how it is progressing with the adoption of those standards.

I agree that we should close the petition. However, we should ask that our clerking team, and any future clerking team, ensure that the petitioners are made aware of any updates that we receive from the Government, rather than just posting them on the website, because folk often miss that.

Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab): I just want to add briefly that this has been an important petition, and I thank the petitioner and the other stakeholders who contributed to our scrutiny of it. It is right that we write to the Scottish Government again for an update and some clarity, and I agree with Mark Ruskell's points about the importance of keeping pace with the WHO guidelines. I am sure that, if there are opportunities in the time that we have left, the committee will ask suitable questions, but this should be an important issue for future committees in the next session of Parliament.

Bob Doris (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP): I am supportive of the comments that have been made, but I just put on the record that the Government has told us that its air quality strategy—cleaner air for Scotland 2—will expire in July 2026, and a planned review has already been bolted into the system, in which all of this will be considered. I commend the petitioner for drawing attention to the issue, but it is reasonable to point out that the Government was already on the ball in considering the matter.

It is also reasonable for us to go back to the Government and say that we, as a committee, will continue to watch the issue, and our successor committee, too, will continue to look at the issue and plot a pathway to higher air quality standards. After all, why would the Government and Parliament not wish to do that?

I fully take on board Kevin Stewart's point that, sometimes, there can be technical barriers, difficulties and delays in getting to targets, so perhaps there should be a bit of nuance in our correspondence to the Government. However, based on the evidence that I have in front of me, the Government appears to be already on the ball in looking at these issues as part of its on-going and planned review.

The Convener: Let me see if I can summarise all of that, if I may.

I think that we are suggesting that we write a letter to the Government, drawing its attention to the evidence that we have received on this matter as well as the recommendations from various organisations that the Government consider alignment with the World Health Organization's strategy. We will also ask the Government for its views on where we are and make sure that it is logged that, when the cleaner air for Scotland 2 strategy comes up for review, our successor committee is kept informed.

That is the basis on which we are agreeing to close the petition. If we are happy with that—and as I do not see anyone violently shaking their head, I guess that we are sort of happy—I ask the committee to delegate power to me to sign off the letter to the Government on the petition and to write to the petitioner on the committee's behalf, thanking them for bringing this matter to our attention so that we could work on it. Is the committee happy with that?

Members *indicated agreement.*

The Convener: I think that that concludes all the things that we are doing in public this morning.

09:46

Meeting continued in private until 10:39.

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