

Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee
Tuesday 20 January 2026
3rd Meeting, 2026 (Session 6)

Draft Climate Change Plan

Introduction

1. At this meeting the Committee will conclude its scrutiny of the draft Climate Change Plan (CCP) with evidence from Shona Robison MSP the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government. This session will focus on the impact of the CCP on local authorities.
2. The Annexe to this paper provides detailed background information on the relevant aspects of the CCP.

Background

3. The [Scottish Government's draft Climate Change Plan 2026-2040](#) was published on 6 November, and must be laid in draft in the Scottish Parliament for 120 days. During this time committees may scrutinise and publish reports on the draft CCP, and the Chamber may debate or consider motions on it.
4. In 2023, the Committee [responded](#) to an invitation to participate in collaborative scrutiny of the CCP from the Convener of the Net Zero, Energy and Transport (NZET) Committee. It confirmed it would consider the buildings chapter of the plan, as well as considering the plan through the lens of local authority delivery. A number of other Parliamentary committees will also be scrutinising elements of the Plan which are relevant to their remits.

Committee scrutiny

5. At its [meeting on 18 November 2025](#), the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee held a round table evidence session on the CCP. Members also met online for a private discussion with a number of individuals about their experiences of retrofitting their homes. [A report summarising the discussions at that meeting is available on the Committee's webpages.](#)
6. At its [meeting on 16 December 2025](#) the Committee then took evidence from two panels of witnesses representing local authorities, the construction industry, and advice and support for the public.
7. At its last [meeting on 13 January 2025](#) the Committee took evidence from the Cabinet Secretary for Housing, on the 'buildings' element of the CCP.

Background briefing

8. Annexe A provides more detailed background on the CCP, and summarises the relevant issues which witnesses have raised with the Committee during the course of its scrutiny.

Next steps

9. The Committee will report on its conclusions in February.

Clerks to the Committee
January 2026

Annexe A - Scrutiny of the Draft Climate Change Plan: 2026-2040 – SPICe briefing



Climate Change Plan background

The Climate Change Plan (CCP) is a strategy document which outlines how the Scottish Government intends to meet emissions reduction targets across all portfolio areas and sectors of the economy.

The parliamentary process for laying and scrutinising a draft climate change plan is contained in three pieces of legislation - the [Climate Change \(Scotland\) Act 2009](#), the [Climate Change \(Emissions Reduction Targets\) \(Scotland\) Act 2019](#) and the [Climate Change \(Emissions Reduction Targets\) \(Scotland\) Act 2024](#).

The last full CCP was in 2018, [the last CCP “update” in 2020](#) was non-statutory. The Scottish Government published a [draft CCP on 6 November 2025](#). Publication of this draft CCP has been delayed. The [Bute House Agreement](#) had committed the Scottish Government to publish a draft by the end of November 2023. However, this was postponed, with [the Scottish Government citing changes to the UK Government’s net zero policies and uncertain economic conditions](#).

Plans to lay a draft CCP in autumn 2024, as effectively required under the legislation then in force, were also postponed, in the light of the Scottish Government accepting the [Climate Change Committee’s verdict](#) that achieving the 2030 interim target to reduce emissions by 75% was no longer credible. The 2024 Act set out a revised process for setting targets (through carbon budgets) and the timetabling of the corresponding climate change plans that, in effect, pushed the laying date back.

Carbon Budgets and Scottish Government statement

The CCP sets out the proposals and policies for meeting the emissions reductions targets. These targets are set out in [‘carbon budget’ regulations](#) made in 2025.

These are limits on the amount of greenhouse gas which can legally be emitted over a given time. Not exceeding a carbon budget is a “Scottish carbon budget target.” The five-year carbon budget targets aim to reduce emissions by:

- 57% lower than baseline levels for 2026-2030,
- 69% lower than baseline levels for 2031-2035,
- 80% lower than baseline levels for 2036-2040, and

- 94% lower than baseline levels for 2041-2045

Alongside the carbon budget regulations, the Scottish Government [must publish a statement which must include](#), in indicative terms, the proposals and policies that will be in the next CCP.

This CCP covers the period 2026-2040. The government's ambition is that Scotland will be "net zero" in carbon emissions by 2045. Net Zero is the point when emissions entering the atmosphere are balanced by removals out of the atmosphere. In doing so, it will seek to meet reduction targets for this period, [based, on advice from the independent Climate Change Committee \(CCC\) published in May 2025](#).

What must the CCP include?

The legislation requires that the CCP must include:

- Scottish Ministers' proposals and policies for meeting the emissions reduction targets during the plan period (see below for more on targets), broken down across seven sectors (energy supply, transport (including international aviation and shipping), business and industrial process, residential and public (in relation to buildings in those sectors), waste management, land use, land use change and forestry, and agriculture);
- the respective contributions (in measurable terms) towards meeting the emissions reduction targets that should be made by each of the seven sectors and each group of associated policies set out in the plan;
- an estimate of the costs and benefits associated with the policies set out in the plan;
- the timescales over which the proposals and policies will take effect;
- the incorporation of the principles of just transition and climate justice;
- demonstration of how the implementation of the plan will contribute to sustainable development; and
- an assessment of the progress towards implementing proposals and policies set out the immediately preceding plan.

Scottish Parliament Call for views on Climate Change Plan

The Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee issued a call for views to inform parliamentary scrutiny of the Climate Change Plan. The call for views closed on 19 September 2025 ahead of the introduction of the plan.

[Individual published responses are available online](#) and a [summary of responses by has been published](#) including a summary of those commenting on the [buildings topic](#). The [non-sector specific summary](#) also has relevant points related to local developments.

The [Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee wrote to all local authorities on 14 November 2025](#) seeking views on aspects related to the buildings chapter and also for broader views on the CCP and the role that local authorities will have in meeting the Scottish Government's emissions reduction targets.

Role of local authorities

As [Audit Scotland](#) states:

“The role that councils have to play in addressing climate change is critical if Scotland is to meet its climate change targets. This is both in terms of how they manage their own activities, estates and assets, as well as the strong leadership needed to tackle climate change across the whole of their local areas. Collaboration between key partners and the communities councils serve will be essential.”

[There are also several pieces of legislation that place specific climate change duties on listed public sector bodies, including local authorities.](#) For example, the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, requires that councils must act in the way best calculated to contribute to the delivery of Scotland's national emissions reduction targets.

Local authorities must also prepare local heat and energy efficiency strategies (LHEES) which include identification of strategic heat decarbonisation zones. [Many local authorities have also declared their own net zero emission targets.](#)

The Draft Climate Change Plan and Local Authorities

The draft CCP does not contain a specific chapter on local authorities but there are numerous references to it throughout the plan. The plan (at Page 8) notes that:

“Public sector action will be vital in allowing Scotland to meet the aims of this Plan and achieve net zero.... However, we also understand the challenges facing the public sector in helping to deliver the policies in this Plan.”

“To that end, we will work with and support public bodies – including Local Authorities – through:

- the **Climate Delivery Framework**, a group co-chaired by the Scottish Government and COSLA, which supports the joint shaping of key climate change policies and implementation at the national, regional and local level,
- the **Sustainable Scotland Network**, which supports the public sector to drive action on climate change, through: building and showcasing leadership on climate change; peer-to-peer knowledge exchange and support; capacity building; and development of case studies, tools and resources,
- **forthcoming revised statutory guidance** for public bodies to support them in putting the climate change duties into practice, including a climate change plan template for Local Authorities,

- **sustainable procurement tools**, which provide detailed guidance to public bodies on including social and environmental requirements in contracts, and
- the **Scottish Climate Intelligence Service**, funded jointly by the Scottish Government and all 32 local authorities, which helps local authorities use data to plan, monitor and deliver climate action.”

The role of councils in other sectors of the draft CCP is not always specifically highlighted in the document. However, in some areas responsibility for delivering the measures generally lies with local authorities.

For example, the Scottish Government’s approach to transport decarbonisation set out in the draft CCP is largely focused on two key areas:

- Encouraging and incentivising the rapid uptake of electric vehicles, as replacements for existing petrol and diesel vehicles, with a goal of all vehicles on the road being zero emission by 2040.
- Reducing private car use by a combination of policy ‘carrots’, that is improving alternatives to car use such as walking, cycling, and public transport, and policy ‘sticks’, physical or fiscal approaches which make car use less attractive, such as road space reallocation to buses, cyclists, and pedestrians.

Local authority roles in delivering these goals include:

- Local management of plans and public sector funding for the development of public electric vehicle charging infrastructure;
- Management of the local road network;
- Powers to instigate bus service improvement partnerships or local bus service franchising schemes;
- The creation of bus lanes, bus gates, and cycle lanes on local roads;
- The subsidy of bus routes that cannot be provided on a commercial basis; and
- The development and implementation of low emission zones, workplace parking levies, road user charging schemes, and on-street parking management.

In relation to **energy supply** (comprised of electricity generation and fuel supply), the draft CCP sets out a vision that by 2035, the renewable capacity will have expanded significantly to meet the increasing demand as other sectors decarbonise and that, “We will be less reliant on imported fuels and global fossil fuel markets; strengthen our energy independence and security; and produce the power we need to meet increasing demand for clean electricity as we decarbonise heat and transport.”

This means the need for growth in renewables capacity, including from offshore and onshore wind, and solar. The draft CCP commits the Scottish Government to working with local authorities, public sector organisations and COSLA to achieve a decarbonised energy supply system.

In relation to emissions from **waste** (comprised mainly of landfill emissions and a smaller amount of emissions from composting, anaerobic digestion and water treatment), emissions reductions in the draft CCP are projected to come from reducing waste sent to landfill (including by diverting it to Energy from Waste), increasing recycling and increasing landfill gas capture.

Local authorities have statutory obligations to provide waste collection and disposal services, and are likely to be involved in implementing, or impacted by, waste policies including:

- The forthcoming **ban on biodegradable municipal waste (BMW) going to landfill** (meaning local authorities have needed to secure alternative waste disposal capacity for BMW, in particular via Energy from Waste, or otherwise divert BMW from landfill e.g. by reducing overall waste levels and increasing recycling)
- Introduction of a **new statutory Code of Practice and statutory local recycling and reuse targets** for household waste (implementing [the Circular Economy \(Scotland\) Act 2024](#)), and participating in ‘co-design’ of the Code – which could have significant implications for local approaches to household waste collection and provision of recycling services and infrastructure.
- Developing actions to **reduce household food waste**.
- Developing **public procurement opportunities** to reduce the environmental impact of public spending.
- The forthcoming **Deposit Return Scheme** and reforms to **extended producer responsibility schemes** e.g. for packaging (which could impact on local authority recycling and waste management schemes)
- Maximising **landfill gas capture** opportunities.

Monitoring and evaluation

In the draft CCP, [Annex 3](#) proposes a two-track process:

- “ (i) monitor annual emissions output relative to the total envelope required to achieve the five-year carbon budget, reporting at the sub sectoral level for every major source of emissions; and
- (ii) early warning indicators to track recent delivery of the key actions required to achieve the carbon budget emissions envelope.”

Early warning indicators will:

“...inform recent progress delivering the key actions required to achieve each respective outcome. The indicators used to monitor progress in decarbonising each source of emissions will depend on data availability and the complexity of the policy package underpinning each respective sub sectoral emissions pathway. Some indicators from the existing monitoring report will be retained where they remain relevant, while new indicators will be introduced where necessary and where data availability allows...”

For the first time, just transition indicators are included under four themes: Communities and Place; People and Equity; Jobs, Skills and Economic Opportunities; and Environment and Biodiversity.

Themes from the evidence to date

A recurring theme from evidence (including the [Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee's inquiry into the role of local government and its cross-sectoral partners](#) in financing and delivering a net-zero Scotland, the [responses to its call for views on the forthcoming CCP on cross sectoral issues](#) and [research from the ClimateXChange](#), published in 2024) has been around:

- the need for clarity on local authorities' roles and responsibilities;
- the need for specialist skills within local authorities; and
- the need of more flexible, multi-year funding.

Key points from the [evidence session on 16 December 2025](#) included:

- Whilst the CCP is broadly welcomed there is a need for a **detailed delivery framework** - a 'route-map' - to give clarity to local authorities. This could be co-produced by Scottish Government and COSLA.
- Local authorities are committed to tackling climate change and delivering net zero, but they face **funding and resource challenges**, with competing priorities (such as a shortfall in funding essential social care services), the need for multi-year funding to give certainty, and the need for skills and capacity-building given that authorities typically have only small teams working on delivering net zero.
- On the issue of **data and monitoring**, local authorities described a need for combining local and national intelligence, and the creation of indicators on delivery and progress to enable funds to be directed where needed and to change the course of action if required. Local authorities' data can be more up to date than emissions data, and therefore can provide early warning signals.
- **Innovation and community engagement** are key. There is a risk that some communities are left behind, and they need to feel the benefits of a just transition such as job creation.

- The Committee heard that **decarbonising transport remains the biggest challenge for local authorities**, which will require significant investment in public transport including integrated ticketing, and infrastructure for electric vehicles.
- The CCP highlights the importance of a **regional perspective**, and the Committee heard that there are existing positive examples of collaboration across local authorities which can be built on.
- The Committee heard about the role of local authorities in delivering renewable energy and the opportunity that it presents. There are some barriers including working with grid providers which have involved delays and increases in costs.

Kate Berry, SPICe Research
15 January 2026

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