

Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee
Tuesday 20 January 2026
3rd Meeting, 2026 (Session 6)

Evidence session on the draft Climate Change Plan: note by the Clerk

Introduction

1. The Climate Change Plan (CCP) is a strategy document which outlines how the Scottish Government intends to meet carbon emissions reduction targets across all portfolio areas and sectors of the economy. A [draft CCP \(covering the period 2026-40\) was laid on 6 November](#) for a period of 120 days.
2. The Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee is leading a cross-committee effort to scrutinise the draft Plan. On 20 January, the Committee will hear from a panel on energy.

Background

3. The [Climate Change \(Scotland\) Act 2009](#) is the main Scottish legislation on climate change. Since coming into force, it has been amended by the [Climate Change \(Emission Reduction Targets\) \(Scotland\) Act 2019](#) and the [Climate Change \(Emissions Reduction Targets\) \(Scotland\) Act 2024](#).
4. Following the passing of these three Acts, Scotland has a statutory target of reaching net zero by 2045¹ and four “carbon budgets”² which map the required emission reductions from now to 2045. Carbon budgets were set by regulation, [following a report by the NZET Committee](#), in October 2025. These set out the maximum amount in carbon emissions that can be “spent” over a given period. Scotland’s carbon budgets last 5 years. Expressed as an average percentage reduction in emissions against the 1990 baseline, they are:
 - 2026 to 2030 – 57% lower
 - 2031 to 2035 – 69% lower
 - 2036 to 2040 – 80% lower
 - 2041 to 2045 – 94% lower.
5. Prior to setting the carbon budgets, the Scottish Government received [advice this May from the Climate Change Committee \(CCC\)](#), the advisory body on climate change to governments in the UK. The advice outlined a "Balanced

¹ “Net zero” is when greenhouse gases being emitted into the atmosphere from human-made processes (e.g. from burning fuels or from agricultural processes) are balanced out by removing the same amount (e.g. by sequestering carbon in trees or peatland or using technology to extract carbon from the air)

² This approach was adopted in Scotland as part of the 2024 Act. This method was already adopted for climate change legislation in Wales, Northern Ireland and the UK as a whole.

Pathway": "an ambitious but credible route to Net Zero for Scotland by 2045". The CCC pathway is referred to throughout the draft CCP.

Timeline of Parliamentary scrutiny

6. The 120 days that the draft CCP is laid in the Parliament ends on 5 March. No statutory process is laid down for this period but the assumption behind this provision was that the Parliament and its committees would use this time to consider and report on the draft and ultimately debate it in the Chamber. This has been the case with all previous versions.
7. Once the 120 days are over, the Scottish Government has a statutory deadline of 90 days before which it must lay the final CCP. However, the Scottish Government has indicated, both in their [Programme for Government 2025-26](#) and in [correspondence with the NZET Committee](#), that they intend to lay the CCP before the Parliament dissolves for the 2026 election. The last day of Parliamentary business before the election is 26 March.
8. When laying the final Plan, the Scottish Government must also lay a statement setting out what changes, if any, they have made to the Plan in response to any representations made to them, including in committee reports or in their public consultation on the draft. The Scottish Government must also publish a response to any resolutions of the Scottish Parliament and any Scottish Parliament Committee reports within three months of them being passed or published.

Content of the draft CCP

9. Section 35 of the 2009 Act sets out matters that must be included in the CCP. These include:
 - the policies and proposals for meeting the carbon budgets during the period of the Plan (2026-2040);
 - the contributions (in measurable terms) towards meeting the emissions reduction targets made by both each sector and each group of associated policies;
 - an estimate of the costs and benefits associated with the policies set out in the Plan;
 - how the [Just Transition](#) principles have been considered in preparing the Plan – the principles are set out in full in [Section 35C of the Act](#);
 - an assessment of the progress made in implementing the policies and proposals set out in the most recent previous CCP.
10. The draft CCP itself is relatively short with the majority of the content included in the annexes. [Annexe 2](#) has further detail on the policies and proposals broken down by seven sectors:
 - Buildings (Residential and Public)

- Transport
- Waste
- Energy supply
- Business and industrial processes
- Agriculture
- Land use, land use change, and forestry

Two further areas are also considered:

- Nature and biodiversity
- Marine

Cross-Parliament scrutiny

11. The Scottish Parliament's Conveners Group set scrutiny of net zero as a strategic priority for the current session of the Parliament, reflecting the transformational impact of both climate change across all committee remits.
12. Several Scottish Parliament committees are also undertaking scrutiny on parts of the draft CCP. A list of the committees who have either already scheduled or are planning scrutiny on the draft Plan is available on [the NZET Committee's webpage](#).

Evidence taken on the draft CCP

Call for views

13. The Committee ran a Call for Views asking respondents what should be in the draft CCP from 27 June – 19 September 2025, with 101 responses received, which are [available on the Committee's webpage](#), alongside theme-based summaries prepared by the Scottish Parliament Information Centre.
14. The Committee launched a further [online consultation](#) once the draft Plan was laid, focused on reaching people who do not normally take part in formal consultations using some themes identified from the [report of a "People's Panel"](#) commissioned by the Committee. This closes on 25 January.

Previous meetings

15. The [Committee's first evidence session](#) on the draft CCP was on 25 November. The Committee took evidence from public sector regulators and advisory bodies. They provided a generalist overview, considering matter such as the draft's overall level of ambition, its deliverability, financing, governance, monitoring and evaluations.
16. [On 16 December](#), the Committee then heard from two panels:

- The first included considered similar themes to the panel on 25 November.
- The second panel discussed what the draft plan says about electric vehicles (EVs) and developing charging networks. This was the first panel diving into a sector in detail.

17. On 6 January, the Committee heard from two further panels:

- The first panel further considered the transport aspects of the draft Plan, focussing on modal shift, public transport and freight.
- The second panel covered matters in the waste section of the draft CCP.

Meeting on 20 January meeting

18. The panel on 20 January will be the first to consider the energy supply chapter of the draft Plan.

19. The Committee will hear from:

- Professor John Underhill, Director of the Centre for Energy Transition and Professor of Geoscience, University of Aberdeen
- David Whitehouse, CEO, Offshore Energies UK
- Adam Berman, Director of Policy and Advocacy, Energy UK
- Simon Coop, National Officer for Energy and Utilities, Unite the Union

20. The CCC considers energy to be “largely reserved” to the UK Government but this sector forms a critical part of the Scottish Government’s proposed pathway to net zero in large part due to the significant increase in electricity supply required to decarbonise other sectors, including, for example, buildings and transport.

21. Since 1990, there has been an overall 82% fall in emissions from Energy Supply as a whole (which includes both electricity supply and fuel supply³).

22. There has been a 93% fall in emissions from electricity supply since 1990, in large part from the closure of coal power stations. Remaining emissions include those from the Peterhead gas plant, energy from waste plants and island diesel generators.

23. The CCC balanced pathway projects a significant increase in renewables capacity in Scotland over the next 20 years, tripling from 15 GW in 2023 to 49 GW in 2035 and then 66 GW by 2045 to match the growing demand expected.

³ Fuel supply relates to oil and gas extraction and processing - it does not relate to the eventual combustion of these fuels.

24. There has been a 58% fall in emissions from fuel supply since 1990 in the most recent data to 2023. It is worth noting that this data does not include the closure of the Grangemouth oil refinery, which happened in 2025.
25. The draft CCP ([Annexe 2](#)) notes on offshore oil and gas production that “The geological maturity of the North Sea basin means that domestic production is forecast to decrease significantly over the next decade” and discusses the decline in jobs in the oil and gas sector in relation to the Just Transition. However, it does not offer a position on offshore oil and gas licensing. It reiterates the Scottish Government’s position of “no support for onshore unconventional oil and gas, including hydraulic fracturing, or fracking” and no support for coal extraction.
26. While the Just Transition for workers in the energy sector is a significant part of the draft Plan and may be discussed during this session, this falls under the remit of the Economy and Fair Work Committee, who took evidence on the draft CCP on [7](#) and [14 January](#).

Future work of the NZET Committee on the draft CCP

27. The Committee will hold one further formal evidence session on the draft Plan on 27 January focussing on renewable energy.
28. The Committee will take closing evidence from the Cabinet Secretary for Transport and the Cabinet Secretary for Climate Action and Energy before reporting to the Parliament. We expect there to be a Chamber debate on the draft Plan just before the end of the scrutiny period on 5 March 2026.

Clerks to the Committee
January 2026