

Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee
Tuesday 3 February 2026
5th 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 3 February, the Committee will hear from the Cabinet Secretary for Transport.

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 in May 2025 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 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 or are currently undertaking scrutiny on the draft Plan is available on [the NZET Committee's webpage](#).

Evidence taken on the draft CCP

Call for views and engagement

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 also launched an [online consultation](#) once the draft Plan was laid, aimed at reaching people who do not normally take part in formal consultations. It used four themes from the [report of a "People's Panel"](#) commissioned by the Committee. These were: accessible and relatable climate policy; participatory and community-led decisions; transparency and accountability; and advice and financial support for households. This closed on 25 January.
15. The Committee met with Members of the [Scottish Youth Parliament's](#) Transport, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee on 13 January. The conversation was based around these same four themes.
16. The Committee also visited Aberdeen on 19 January:
 - The Committee visited and met with staff from the [Energy Transition Zone](#) in Aberdeen, and partner organisations [North East Scotland College](#), who run

the Energy Transition Skills Hub and [ORE Catapult](#), who run the Floating Wind Innovation Centre.

- Then the Committee met about 25 people from local community groups at the Aberdeen Science Centre. The same four themes as above were used to facilitate a discussion about the draft CCP.

17. A distillation of views from all this engagement work will be shared with Members as part of their preparation for the final evidence session on the draft CCP with the Scottish Government on 10 February.

Previous meetings

18. 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 matters such as the draft's overall level of ambition, its deliverability, financing, governance, monitoring and evaluations.

19. [On 16 December](#), the Committee then heard from two panels:

- The first considered similar themes to the panel on 25 November.
- The second panel discussed what the draft plan says about electric vehicles and developing charging networks for them.

20. [On 6 January](#), the Committee heard from two further panels:

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

21. [On 20 January](#), the Committee heard from a panel on the energy supply aspects of the draft Plan, focusing particularly on oil and gas, hydrogen, and carbon capture and storage.

22. [On 27 January](#) the Committee heard from a further panel on the energy supply chapter of the draft Plan, focussing on renewable energy.

Meeting on 3 February

23. Two Cabinet Secretaries will give evidence to the Committee on the draft CCP, the first being the Cabinet Secretary for Transport and supporting officials on 3 February covering the transport parts of the draft Plan.

24. Around one third of Scotland's total emissions are from transport. There has been a 13% reduction in transport emissions since 1990. The draft Plan projects a 68% fall in Transport emissions between 2025-40, by far the biggest absolute contributor to overall reductions in this period.

25. A significant portion of the emissions reductions are expected to come from switching to electric vehicles, with a goal of all vehicles on the road being zero emission by 2040.
26. The [2021 Climate Change Plan Update](#) included a policy to reduce car kilometres by 20% by 2030, however this was abandoned in April 2025 following an [Audit Scotland report](#) advising it was unlikely to be met. This draft CCP commits to “reduce annual car mileage by at least 4% by 2030 (on a 2030 ‘business as usual’ forecast baseline)”³. It also says this target will be kept under review and could be strengthened in the final CCP.
27. The draft also references already established policies to incentivise public transport use, including concessionary bus fares, the [bus infrastructure fund](#), and a commitment to funding active travel.
28. On freight, the draft CCP references the actions set out in the 2024 [HGV Decarbonisation Pathway for Scotland](#), including the £2 million HGV Market Readiness Fund launched in July 2025.

Future work of the NZET Committee on the draft CCP

29. The Committee will take closing evidence from the Cabinet Secretary for Climate Action and Energy on 10 February. This will cover both main policy sectors within her ministerial remit – energy supply and waste, as well as the draft Plan as a whole, in view of her role as Minister in charge of the draft Plan and of overall governmental coordination on net zero. The Committee expects to publish its report in late February, with a Chamber debate following just before the end of the scrutiny period on 5 March 2026.

Clerks to the Committee
January 2026

³ The forecast baseline predicts an increase in distance driven. Therefore, a decrease of 4% against this baseline would not actually lead to less driving. This is further explained in a [SPICe blog](#) on the transport aspects of the draft CCP.