

Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee
Tuesday 3 March 2026
11th Meeting, 2026 (Session 6)

Draft Climate Change Plan

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 led a cross-committee scrutiny effort. The Committee published its [report on the draft CCP](#) on 27 February.
3. At its meeting on 3 March, the Committee will take evidence from the Climate Change Committee (CCC), the advisory body on climate change to governments in the UK. The CCC published their [Progress in reducing emissions in Scotland – 2025 report to Parliament](#) on 25 February 2026. As it was published on shortly before the Committee's report, it was not considered during the Committee's scrutiny or report writing.
4. The Committee invited the CCC to give evidence in early February, however they advised they would not be able to until after their report had been published.

Background

1. 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](#).
2. 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

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.

- 2036 to 2040 – 80% lower
 - 2041 to 2045 – 94% lower.
3. Prior to setting the carbon budgets, the Scottish Government received [advice in May 2025 from the CCC](#). The advice outlined a "Balanced Pathway": "an ambitious but credible route to Net Zero for Scotland by 2045".

Timeline of Parliamentary scrutiny

4. The 120 days that the draft CCP is laid in the Parliament end 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.
5. 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.
6. 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 and the CCC's progress report. 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.
7. A Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee chamber debate on the draft CCP is scheduled to take place on Thursday 5 March.

Content of the draft CCP

8. 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.
9. 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

10. 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.
11. Several Scottish Parliament committees are also undertaking scrutiny on parts of the draft CCP, and some of this work is still ongoing. Committees who published reports on the draft CCP ahead of our own are:
- [Rural Affairs and Islands Committee report](#)
 - [Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee report](#)
12. Committees who wrote letters to the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee related to scrutiny of the draft Plan are:
- [Health, Social Care and Sport Committee letter](#)
 - [Economy and Fair Work Committee letter](#)
 - [Criminal Justice Committee letter](#)
 - [Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee letter](#)

- [Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee letter](#)
- [Social Justice and Social Security Committee letter](#)
- [Public Audit Committee letter](#)

Evidence and information gathered 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 from the Scottish Parliament Information Service (SPICe) has been [published on the Committee's webpage](#).

Previous meetings

18. The Committee took oral evidence on the draft CCP first on cross cutting themes of governance, monitoring, participation, and how the draft Plan supports the delivery of emissions reductions at its meetings on [25 November](#) and [16 December](#).
19. The Committee then took evidence on the three sectors within its remit:
 - Transport (also on [16 December](#) and [6 January](#));
 - Waste (also on [6 January](#)); and

- Energy Supply ([20 January](#) and [27 January](#))
20. [On 3 February](#) the Committee took evidence from the Cabinet Secretary for Transport and supporting officials on the Transport sector.
21. [On 10 February](#) the Committee took closing evidence from the Cabinet Secretary for Climate Action and Energy and supporting officials on cross cutting themes in the draft Plan as well as the Waste and Energy Supply sectors.

Climate Change Committee progress report

22. The CCC's progress report summarises their analysis of the draft CCP saying:

“Now that the Scottish Government has adopted its new system of carbon budgets and has developed a draft plan to deliver them, it is essential to make strong progress on delivery. The key lesson from the previous system of annual targets was that ambition alone is not enough – this needs to be backed up by timely, effective policy and implementation. Effective monitoring and evaluation will also be essential to ensure delivery remains on track, together with robust contingency planning to allow the plan to adapt to evolving circumstances. The coming year presents a critical opportunity for the Scottish Government to demonstrate commitment to its ambition by ensuring that policy is well set up to support markets to continue to grow, costs to continue to fall, and emissions to continue to reduce.”

23. It also sets out 18 priority recommendations for the Scottish Government which are grouped into six “core themes”. The themes are:
- Produce an effective and credible final Climate Change Plan.
 - Implement a clear delivery plan for decarbonising home heating.
 - Produce a clear strategy for delivering the required land use changes.
 - Enable the rapid transition to electric transport.
 - Enhance confidence in the delivery of negative emissions technologies.
 - Continue to strengthen public and business engagement with a focus on impactful low carbon choices and proactive transition plans.

Meeting on 3 March

24. The Committee will take evidence from Emma Pinchbeck, Chief Executive and Dr Emily Nurse, Head of Net Zero, Climate Change Committee.
25. Given both the Committee and the CCC have recently published reports on the draft CCP, the Committee may discuss the conclusions and recommendations of the two reports ahead of the debate in the Chamber on Thursday 5 March.

Clerks to the Committee February 2026