

Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee
Tuesday 10 March 2026
12th Meeting, 2026 (Session 6)

Note by the Clerk on the Environmental Standards Scotland Strategy 2026 to 2031 (ESS/2026/01 – Re-laid document)

Overview

1. At this meeting, the Committee will consider a document subject to parliamentary control. The Committee is invited to consider the document and decide what, if any, recommendations to make.
2. More information about the document is summarised below:

Title of document: [Environmental Standards Scotland Strategy 2026 to 2031](#)

Laid under: [Schedule 2, paragraph 4](#) of the UK Withdrawal from the European Union (Continuity) (Scotland) Act 2021

Laid on: 5 February 2026

Procedure: The document is subject to a bespoke procedure for parliamentary consideration under the [UK Withdrawal from the European Union \(Continuity\) \(Scotland\) Act 2021](#) (“the Continuity Act”).

Deadline for committee consideration: 16 March 2026 (Advisory deadline for any committee report to be published)

Deadline for Chamber consideration: 16 March 2026 (Statutory 40-day deadline for any decision not to approve the document)

Background

3. The document is a revised strategy (2026 to 2031) for Environmental Standards Scotland (“ESS”) and has been laid before Parliament by ESS.
4. ESS is an independent public body established by the Continuity Act. Its purpose includes monitoring public authorities’ compliance with, and monitoring the effectiveness of, environmental law in Scotland.
5. When ESS was first established, the Continuity Act required ESS to prepare and publish a first strategy setting out how it intended to exercise its functions. This was done in 2022, and the Committee considered the first strategy at its meeting on [25 October 2022](#) and published its report on [11 November 2022](#).
6. Under [schedule 2, paragraph 4](#) of the Continuity Act, ESS is required to review the strategy from time and time and may, if it considers it appropriate, revise it. The current document is a revised strategy for the purposes of paragraph 4.

Paragraph 4 also provides that, unless a revision makes only minor modifications to the previous strategy, the revised strategy is subject to [schedule 2, paragraph 2](#), which involves parliamentary procedure.

7. Under paragraph 2(5) of schedule 2, the strategy must be laid before the Parliament for 40 days, during which the Parliament could resolve that it should not be approved. If such a resolution is passed during the 40 days, ESS must not publish the strategy, and must instead review and revise it, and lay a further revised version before Parliament within 3 months.
8. Once laid, the document is referred to:
 - the Delegated Powers and Law Reform (DPLR) Committee, for scrutiny on various technical grounds, and
 - a lead committee, whose remit includes the subject-matter of the document, for scrutiny on policy grounds.
9. The Scottish Parliament has designated the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee as lead committee to consider the document.

Updated strategy

10. On 5 February 2026, ESS [wrote to the Committee](#) to advise that it had laid its updated proposed Strategy for the period of 2026-2031 before the Scottish Parliament for approval.
11. The proposed strategy is available on the ESS website: [ESS Proposed Strategy 2026 – 2031 - Environmental Standards Scotland](#).

Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee consideration

12. A previous version of this revised strategy was laid by ESS [10 October 2025](#) and considered by the Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee (DPLRC) on 4 November 2025. The Committee reported in its [82nd report, 2025](#), on the general reporting ground, that some of the information required by the parent Act did not appear to be contained in the revised strategy itself.
13. ESS subsequently withdrew that version and advised that it intended to review and revise the document in light of the DPLRC's report.
14. The document before the Committee today is the re-laid version.
15. The DPLRC considered the re-laid document on 24 February 2026 and reported on it in its [21st Report, 2026](#). The DPLRC made no recommendations in relation to the document.

16. The Committee welcomed that all the issues raised by the Committee in its report of [5 November 2025](#) on a previous version of the revised strategy have been addressed in this new version.

Today's meeting

17. At its meeting on [28 October 2025](#), the Committee agreed to take evidence from ESS on the proposed strategy.

18. The Committee will take evidence from the following panel of ESS representatives—

- Dr Richard Dixon, Chair
- Mark Roberts, Chief Executive
- Neil Langhorn, Head of Strategy and Analysis

Committee consideration

19. So far, no motion recommending the document not be approved has been lodged.

20. Following the evidence session today, it is for the Committee to decide whether to make a recommendation in relation to the document.

21. If members have points to raise, the Committee could write to ESS and/or publish a report to explain its concerns.

22. If members have no points to raise, the Committee should note the document (that is, agree that it has no recommendations to make).

Clerks to the Committee
March 2026