

Climate Action Committee
Thursday 17 September 2026
3rd Meeting, 2026 (Session 7)

Climate Action Committee - determination of committee priorities

Introduction

1. The remit of the Climate Action Committee is to consider and report on matters within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Climate Action and Rural Affairs, with the exception of rural affairs.
2. At its first meeting on 25 June 2026, the Committee agreed to hold two meetings to discuss priority areas within its remit. It agreed to hear from stakeholders and the Cabinet Secretary for Climate Action and Rural Affairs.
3. This paper provides background information to inform the evidence session with the Cabinet Secretary for Climate Action and Rural Affairs.

Remit

4. The responsibilities of the Cabinet Secretary for Climate Action and Rural Affairs under the heading of Climate Action are:
 - cross government co-ordination of Net Zero policy
 - climate crisis and environmental protection
 - Scottish Environment Protection Agency
 - environmental and climate justice and international climate change
 - environmental quality
 - sustainable development
 - flood prevention and coastal erosion
 - drinking water quality and regulator, Scottish Water, private water, hydronation
 - circular economy
 - Emissions Trading Schemes
 - deposit return, waste issues, Zero Waste Scotland
 - Green Growth Accelerator

- nature recovery targets and NatureScot
- biodiversity and endangered species

Reports and briefings

5. The following briefings and reports provide an overview of policy areas within the committee remit:

- Session 6 [Net Zero, Energy and Transport Legacy Report](#)
- Session 6 [Rural Affairs and Islands Committee Legacy Report](#)
- SPICe Briefing: [Key Issues for Session 7](#)
- SPICe Briefing: [Environment: Session 7 Subject Profile](#) (August 2026)
- SPICe briefing: [Public Service Reform: an overview](#) (July 2026)

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6. On 3 September 2026, the Committee held an evidence session with stakeholders, including public bodies and regulators, on their priorities across this parliamentary session.

7. The Committee heard from two panels of witnesses, including:

- Panel 1:
 - Nick Halfhide, Chief Executive Officer, NatureScot
 - Wendy Kimpton, Director of Strategy and Regulation, Scottish Water
 - Ciaran McGuigan, Chief Executive Officer, Zero Waste Scotland
 - Dan Paris, Director of Policy and Engagement, Scottish Environment LINK
 - Nicole Paterson, Chief Executive, Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)
- Panel 2:
 - Alison Cumming, Executive Director, Performance Audit & Best Value, Audit Scotland
 - Dr Richard Dixon, Chair, Environmental Standards Scotland

8. The official report of that meeting is available on the Committee's website:

- [Official report of the Climate Action Committee – 3 September 2026](#)

9. Following the evidence session, the Committee agreed to [write](#) to the witnesses seeking further information on the themes which the Committee did not cover at the meeting.

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10. At today's meeting, the Committee will take evidence from the Cabinet Secretary for Climate Action and Rural Affairs and Scottish Government officials on the Scottish Government's priorities relevant to the Committee's remit over the parliamentary session, including those set out in the [Programme for Government 2026-2031](#).

Correspondence and written submissions

11. At its meeting on 25 June, the Committee agreed to write to the Cabinet Secretary for Climate Action and Rural Affairs on the Scottish Government's Climate Change Plan and received a response in July:
 - [Letter from the Convener to the Cabinet Secretary for Climate Action and Rural Affairs on the Scottish Government's Climate Change Plan](#) – 29 June 2026
 - [Letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Climate Action and Rural Affairs on the Scottish Government's Climate Change Plan](#) – 28 July 2026
12. In July, the Cabinet Secretary wrote to the Committee to provide an update on the commencement of the Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2026:
 - [Letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Climate Action and Rural Affairs on commencement of provisions in the Natural Environment \(Scotland\) Act 2026](#) – 30 July 2026
13. Environmental Standards Scotland copied their letter to the Cabinet Secretary on the timescales proposed for commencement to the Committee:
 - [Letter from Environmental Standards Scotland to the Cabinet Secretary for Climate Action and Rural Affairs on the commencement of provisions in the Natural Environment \(Scotland\) Act 2026](#) – 24 August 2026
14. The following written submissions were received from witnesses in advance of the meeting on 3 September:
 - [Submission from Audit Scotland on priorities within the Committee's remit](#)
 - [Submission from Zero Waste Scotland on priorities within the Committee's remit](#)
 - [Submission from Environmental Standards Scotland on priorities within the Committee's remit](#)

- [Submission from Scottish Environment LINK on priorities within the Committee's remit](#)
- [Submission from Scottish Water on priorities within the Committee's remit](#)
- [Submission from SEPA on priorities within the Committee's remit](#)

15. The following written submissions were received from witnesses following the meeting:

- [Supplementary submission from Environmental Standards Scotland on priorities within the Committee's remit](#)
- [Supplementary submission from Audit Scotland on priorities within the Committee's remit](#)
- [Supplementary submission from Scottish Environment LINK on priorities within the Committee's remit](#)
- [Supplementary submission from Zero Waste Scotland on priorities within the Committee's remit](#)
- [Supplementary submission from NatureScot on priorities within the Committee's remit](#)
- [Supplementary submission from Scottish Water on priorities within the Committee's remit](#)
- [Supplementary submission from SEPA on priorities within the Committee's remit](#)

Next steps

16. Following today's evidence session, the Committee will consider how to incorporate the issues raised into its future work programme.

Clerks to the Committee
September 2026