Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee

2nd Meeting, 2022 (Session 6), Tuesday, 18 January 2022

Evidence session with Local Government's cross-sectoral delivery partners

Note by the clerk

Introduction

1. In November 2021, the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee launched an [inquiry into the role of local government and its cross-sectoral partners in financing and delivering a net-zero Scotland](#).

2. This inquiry aims to seek out the main barriers at a local level to Scotland reaching its net zero targets. It will consider what practical steps councils are taking to break them down, in partnership with business, the voluntary sector, and local communities. It will also highlight areas where change will be needed if councils are to play a full role in helping us achieve the goal of a net zero Scotland.

3. The inquiry will also consider:
   - what role the Scottish Government and its agencies can play in both supporting and, where necessary, challenging local government to work well with its partners to deliver net zero
   - how local government can play its part in ensuring a "just transition" to net zero.

4. The Committee launched this inquiry with an open [Call for Views](#)(which closes on 21 January 2022).

5. On 11 January, the Committee heard from two panels of representative councils with various net zero targets. [The Official Report for this evidence session can be found here](#).

6. The purpose of the evidence session today is to hear from two panels of cross-sectoral delivery partners as part of the Committee's inquiry—

   Panel 1 - Sustainable Scotland Network
   - George Tarvit, Director,
   - John Wincott, Chair,
   - Mark Williams, Vice Chair; and

- Lorna Jarvie, Steering Group Member, Sustainable Scotland Network.

Panel 2 – Community delivery partners
- Philip Revell, Chair, Scottish Communities Climate Action Network;
- Ailsa Raeburn, Chairperson, Community Land Scotland; and
- Mark McRitchie, Interim Chief Executive, Development Trusts Association Scotland.

7. These organisations have a variety of roles:

- Sustainable Scotland Network (SSN): The Sustainable Scotland Network (SSN) is Scotland's public sector network on sustainability and climate change. The Network has over 600 individual members across 180 public bodies in Scotland - including local authorities, NHS Scotland, Scottish Water, Scottish Fire and Rescue, NatureScot, universities and colleges - and seeks to drive action on climate change, scaling up impact through leadership, policy, and research. The Scottish Government and SSN produced guidance in October 2021 to Scotland's public bodies on their leadership role in the shared national endeavour to tackle the global crises of health, climate emergency and biodiversity loss. This can be found here – Public sector leadership on the global climate emergency: guidance - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)

- The Scottish Communities Climate Action Network (SCCAN) support community-led action in Scotland to address the climate and nature emergency and work for a just, thriving and resilient Scotland.

- Community Land Scotland (CLS) provides a representative voice for Scotland's rural and urban community landowners. It seeks to promote the sustainable development benefits of community landownership and encourage more community ownership of land and buildings.

- The Development Trusts Association Scotland (DTAS) is a member-led organisation which aims to promote, support and represent development trusts in Scotland. DTAS has over 300 members – community-led organisations seeking to improve the quality of life for local people in urban, rural and island communities across Scotland.

Key inquiry questions

8. With the inquiry covering a broad range of issues, the Committee agreed a series of overarching questions to frame the inquiry:

Council planning, decision-making and capacity in relation to net zero
1) How effective are councils at strategic planning, budgeting, and making procurement decisions that align with net zero goals? If there are barriers, what are they?

2) What role can the local government planning system and local development plans do to help us reach net zero? Could the planning system do more?

3) What innovation, skills and capacity are needed in the local government workforce when it comes to making net zero achievable? Does that capacity exist or are there gaps?

Partnering to achieve net zero goals

4) How well do councils leverage in support and finance from the private sector for net zero delivery? Are City Region Deals being used effectively for this? What mechanisms or forums are there for sharing opportunities and good practice?

5) How well do councils partner with the voluntary sector and social enterprises to work towards net zero goals? Are there instances of good practice you can point to or areas where opportunities are being missed?

6) How well do councils involve local communities in decision-making on major net zero projects and how do they support community-led initiatives?

Role of the Scottish Government and its agencies

7) What is the Scottish Government doing to help the local government sector deliver on net zero goals? What, if anything, could it do more of to help the sector?

8) What is the role of enterprise agencies or other public bodies as enablers of joint working on net zero goals by local government and its cross-sectoral partners?

Local government work on net zero in particular areas

9) How are councils working with cross-sectoral partners to decarbonise heat in buildings and to ensure they have greater energy efficiency?

10) How are councils working with cross-sectoral partners to decarbonise transport (including encouraging active travel) and to improve air quality?

11) How are councils working with cross-sectoral partners to promote recycling and a "circular economy"?

12) How are councils working with cross-sectoral partners to use the natural environment (its "green infrastructure") to achieve net zero targets?

Next steps

9. The Committee want to hear as many informed views as possible, and to engage positively with councils, companies, SMEs, academia, voluntary organisations and grassroots groups.

10. The Committee will take formal evidence at committee meetings across early 2022. The Committee also intend to make visits, seeing practical examples of how councils work with their partners to deliver net zero.

11. In January, the Committee will hear from local councils, delivery partners, and private sector and umbrella organisations as part of their evidence gathering.

12. The Committee will then use the submissions from the call for views to inform an approach to evidence sessions and engagement work across the next few months.

13. The Committee aim to report to the Parliament in Spring 2022.