

Edward Mountian MSP
Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee

24 July 2023,

Dear Edward,

Thank you for your letter of 30 June regarding progress against the Scottish Government's climate commitments. I welcome the scrutiny of the NZET committee and look forward to working with you to further develop Scotland's climate ambitions.

Scotland's Climate Assembly gave us a key insight into the measures which the Scottish public expect from Government for a just transition to net zero emissions by 2045. The Scottish Government does not conduct specific monitoring of the 81 recommendations made by Scotland's Climate Assembly, however work is underway to implement them. The Scottish Government accepted or partially accepted 75 of the 81 recommendations and has already acted in several areas. For example: rolling out support for a new network of sharing libraries; and through the national framework of Learning for Sustainability, included emissions and emissions reduction topics in our education programmes across the country. We have also committed to continuing to consider the Assembly's recommendations as policy develops in Scotland, including in the development of the next Climate Change Plan and Just Transition Plans.

The Public Engagement Strategy (PES) for Climate Change sets out our commitment to being an open government, where people can actively participate in shaping inclusive policies that promote mitigation of and adaptation to climate change. In addition to the use of Assembly recommendations as an evidence base, a participation programme is currently underway to gather input from stakeholders, members of the public and communities as we develop the next Climate Change Plan, Just Transition Plans and the next Adaptation Programme. We are currently conducting engagement activities with this aim, and these will continue into 2024, using an approach underpinned by the PES.

The PES articulates our vision: for all of Scotland to understand the challenges we face and embrace their role in our transition to a net zero and climate ready Scotland. The monitoring and evaluation strategy for the PES takes a broad approach, including consideration of national indicators set out in the Scottish Household Survey and data collected from individual programmes in addition to bespoke commissioned research. The approach includes a baseline survey in year 1 of the strategy (2022), allowing development of new indicators to complement those already tracked in the Scottish Household Survey. This survey will then be repeated in years 3 and 5 (24/25 and 26/27) of the implementation period to compare progress alongside the other elements set out above.

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In November 2022, we published our Public Engagement Survey results¹, which act as a baseline for the PES. These results are already being used to inform and refine our approach to public engagement. In 2024, we will conduct an interim review of the strategy at the mid-way point of delivery which will draw together the data we have collected from individual programmes, our national indicators and the results from commissioned surveys to provide an assessment of our overall progress. More information will be available once the interim review has concluded.

We have not yet reached the mid-way point for delivery of this strategy which will be accompanied by a mid-term review, but we are able to provide several updates on our progress to date.

Our vision of a net zero Scotland is not possible without the support and contribution of our people, and communities are key players in making this transition a success. To help realise this, our PES set out our intention to launch a network of Community Climate Action Hubs. In 2021, two pilot Hubs were set up in Scotland and following their success, this initiative is now being scaled up, with backing of £4.3 million available in this financial year, and three new Hubs already operating. A bespoke monitoring and evaluation framework for the Community Climate Action Hubs programme is currently under development and will be in place by the end of this financial year.

Our Let's Do Net Zero (LDNZ) marketing campaign is integral to the delivery of the PES and aims to help the public to understand climate change and nature loss, and how it relates to their lives. In 2021-22 the LDNZ branded campaign reached 94% of all adults in Scotland (over 4 million people) on average 24 times. An independent evaluation found that the campaign was motivating: more than three quarters of those who recognised the campaign have taken action since (based on a sample of target audience). Development is currently underway for the next wave of campaigns across a range of media outlets in 2023-24, and we will continue to monitor the impact of these campaigns through nationally representative surveys, alongside qualitative evaluation methods.

Scotland's Climate Week, our week-long programme of events and initiatives across the country engaging businesses, organisations and communities in Scotland's response to the global climate emergency, continues to be a success. During Climate Week 2022, three Scottish Government co-organised public events were attended by 323 members of the public, and 280 public sector staff attended four public sector Scottish Government co-organised events aimed at improving climate change understanding and stimulating behaviour change. In addition, the then First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, addressed over 150 primary classes live from St Albert's Primary school for a national assembly to round off Climate Action School's Climate Action Week, which was attended by 15,000 pupils across Scotland. The Climate Week website landing page and Partners Toolkit both achieved over four times more visits/downloads than previous years and the #ScotClimateWeek hashtag was used more than ever before, gaining almost 5100 mentions across all social media platforms.

¹ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/public-engagement-climate-change-scotland-2022/>
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The most recently available data from the Scottish Household Survey indicates that there has been an increase in the proportion of adults viewing climate change as an immediate and urgent problem, from 80% in 2020 to 83% in 2021², compared to the 68% reported in 2019 (the most recently available data at the time the PES published). The next available data will be published later this year to report on data gathered in 2022.

We are continuing to undertake work to ensure our approach to reporting on progress is as accessible as possible and have recently commissioned research to inform our approach to communicating key milestones, required actions and progress in Scotland. This will complement rather than replace existing reporting on progress towards becoming a net zero nation as part of statutory duties under the Climate Change Act 2019.

Cost and benefits assessments for the draft Climate Change Plan are well underway, and will continue alongside further policy development currently taking place. The final analysis will assess policies based on a variety of quantitative and qualitative criteria and set out estimates of impacts, as well as setting out how the policies will affect different sectors of the Scottish economy and different regions in Scotland.

I can also confirm we are anticipating the Climate Change Committee's (CCC) next Scottish progress report on reducing emissions to be in early 2024, timed to allow the CCC to include their views on the forthcoming draft of the next Climate Change Plan, as required under the 2009 Climate Change (Scotland) Act.

Thank you for highlighting the recommendations in the Committees' reports on the draft Climate Change Plan update. These will continue to be taken into account as we further develop the policies and proposals within the upcoming Plan. As you note, officials have worked closely with sector policy leads to improve the SMART quality of policies. Outcomes and policies will continue to be assessed using relevant data via the monitoring framework, and where possible the plan will provide detail on delivery and implementation of policies.

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² <https://www.gov.scot/collections/scottish-household-survey-publications/>
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