



Stop Climate Chaos Scotland response to Just Transition Commission call for evidence June 2020

Name of organisation

Stop Climate Chaos Scotland

Does your response relate to a specific sector?

This is a cross-sector response. Stop Climate Chaos Scotland is a diverse coalition of over 50 civil society organisations in Scotland campaigning together on climate change. Our members include environment, faith and belief groups, international development organisations, trade and student unions and community groups.

What do you see as the main economic opportunities and challenges associated with meeting Scotland's climate change targets?

We have the opportunity to transition to a green economy that is fair to everyone here and around the world, bringing good jobs, better health, and stronger communities, and setting us on a path away from climate catastrophe. The COVID-19 pandemic, the international scale of the transition, and the dependence of our current economic system on consumption and fossil fuel-centric industries, all present challenges and opportunities for meeting Scotland's climate targets.

The COVID-19 pandemic has devastated communities and economies – but has also demonstrated the ways in which decisive government action and investment can mitigate catastrophe. Stimulus packages under development must place climate change at their heart, rather than propping up unsustainable technologies, behaviours, and industries.

Our transition must be international. Global crises – economic, health, or environmental – require a global response to defeat them. Communities in the Global South are facing some of the greatest challenges of our time: coronavirus, climate change, conflict and extreme poverty. The socio-economic impacts of these crises threaten to undo the last 50 years of progress on tackling global poverty. Scotland has historically been reliant on fossil fuels and has been a contributor to global carbon emissions and must act now to bring about urgent global action on climate justice.

A growth-centred economy and profligate consumption, especially in wealthier nations, is at the heart of many of our environmental problems and has led us to a climate emergency. **A circular**

and wellbeing economy, with a greater focus on services, offers a crucial opportunity to tackle the social, economic, and environmental challenges of our time. This should be the focus of our investment, rather than seeking to boost traditional models of private consumption to stimulate a recovery based on GDP and business as usual.

Fossil fuel intensive sectors, such as the oil and gas industry and its supply chains, have a wealth of technological expertise that can be of great value to green industries. Organisations and workers in these sectors are worried about the impact of transitioning to a low carbon economy. However, these sectors are currently vulnerable to shocks in the global oil market, so supporting organisations and employees in these sectors to **transition to low carbon industries** will provide workers with secure employment that is sustainable in the long term, whilst making organisations more resilient, and economically and environmentally sustainable.

All of these measures will require **significant government intervention and investment**. This underlines the importance of making the right investment decisions today, rather than continuing to use public funds to construct assets and prop up industries that will not be compatible with a zero-carbon economy. Taxation policy should be used to disincentivise the activities we want to lose and provide funding for the activities we want to gain. It is important to be mindful that the costs of inaction to future generations would be far greater than the costs of investing in a Just Transition today.

What do you think are the wider social (health, community etc.) opportunities and challenges associated with meeting Scotland's climate change targets?

Action to tackle climate change can deliver multiple social goods. To list a few examples:

- A world-leading renewable electricity system can deliver lower levels of fuel poverty, greater resilience to geopolitical crises, and other positive impacts through public ownership, including community benefit funds and community ownership;
- Making buildings fit for the future through energy efficiency measures and renewable heating will save money for households and businesses, reducing fuel poverty and health issues;
- Investment in public transport, walking, and cycling will improve air quality, increase activity levels and fitness, and make our streets safer for the most vulnerable. It will also make the most affordable modes of transport more reliable and accessible, improving access to services and employment, and give us space to reinvigorate our high streets with flourishing local businesses, community facilities, shared workspaces, and better public spaces.
- Moving to a circular economy is key if we are to tackle our overconsumption of natural resources. Investment in waste reduction will not only create jobs and reduce the burden on local authorities, but can bring economic opportunities and innovation to businesses. Under a circular economy, high rates of recycling, reuse and repair will see less waste as materials

circulate for as long as possible, and maximise nutrient cycling will mean cleaner water and air.

- Enhancing our natural landscapes that act as carbon sinks – such as peatland, woodland and seagrass meadows – can bolster biodiversity by providing safe habitats for the 11% of species at risk of extinction in Scotland, improve access to greenspace (which the COVID-19 crisis has underlined as a vital mental health issue), and maintain Scotland's greatest tourist asset, its landscape. Protecting Scotland's marine carbon stores will maintain unique ecosystems and improve the health of our oceans, supporting a sustainable fishing industry;
- A fair transition for Scotland's farming industry will strengthen our reputation for quality produce, support our health by growing a wide range of fruit and vegetables, provide greater opportunities for jobs in the rural economy, and enhance biodiversity – with an opportunity and challenge provided by the development of post-Brexit regulations and support;
- Investing in global climate justice will strengthen our bonds with countries around the world, unlocking greater opportunities for collaboration and cultural exchange, and benefitting societies that stand to suffer the most from climate change.

Changing ingrained personal behaviours and lifestyles and the structures that encourage these will be a core challenge in delivering a Just Transition. The COVID-19 crisis has seen radical changes in behaviour, some of which – such as higher levels of home working and active travel – will reduce emissions if they are maintained in the long term. There has been a marked increase in demand for local food and support for local food producers and shops. This is an opportunity for the Government to bring forward measures that enable us to keep and accelerate some of the changes in behaviour that will help improve health, increase resilience and reduce emissions. These changes need to be felt widely and fairly.

What would a successful transition to net-zero emissions look like for your sector/community?

As a cross-sector organisation, we take a broad view of how a successful transition should impact upon our society as a whole – much of which is set out in our answers above.

Ensuring wellbeing for both people and the planet must be the central purpose of government. We must ensure that we all have enough to participate fully in society while together we respect climate and nature boundaries. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us what matters to us most - good health, our families and communities, clean air, green spaces, and reliable access to good food. A successful Just Transition should deliver these, for everyone in Scotland and around the world.

A Just Transition should promote the growth of green industries, creating urgent, new, quality opportunities for those who have lost their jobs and livelihoods during the pandemic as well as for those likely to be impacted during the transition to a low carbon economy. Government support and training should be planned for those sectors that will be most affected and investment provided for new opportunities in climate friendly industries of the future. We urge caution with new technologies such as Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS)/ BioEnergy Carbon Capture and Storage (BECCS) when interpreting models for and pathways to net zero.

Using an example from one sector, a successful transition in agriculture would mean soil health is recognised as fundamental to all farming businesses with all resources used as effectively as possible. Farmers would be respected stewards of Scotland's landscape, supporting our resilience through the food they produce and the ecosystems they support. Their actions would be supported with excellent training and advice, based on agroecological principles.

What actions do you think the Scottish Government should take to manage the opportunities and challenges referenced above?

Leadership and influencing

Scotland must use COP26 in Glasgow to push for robust implementation of the Paris Agreement and for significantly increased financial support to help impacted countries adapt to ever-increasing climate impacts, pursue low-carbon development models, and deal with irreversible climate damage.

Investment

The Scottish Government should take decisive action to invest in the following key policy areas, in line with the opportunities and challenges outlined above. This should be in collaboration with local authorities, which hold many of the necessary powers to act in these areas:

1. Renewable energy generation & distribution
2. Making buildings fit for the future
3. Green transport, cycling, and walking in both rural and urban contexts
4. Waste reduction and the circular economy
5. Protecting and enhancing peatland and woodland
6. Scottish farming transition
7. Protecting and enhancing marine carbon stores
8. Climate justice

Regulatory change

The Scottish Government should use its regulatory powers to:

1. Ensure that all homes reach at least Energy Performance 'C' by 2030
2. Expedite the an gas boilers in new homes and include a date for an end to like-for-like replacements of gas boilers and cookers;
3. Establish a city-wide zero emission zone in operation in every city by 2030;
4. Introduce a full ban on all items in the EU Single-Use Plastics Directive (SUP) priority list by 2021;
5. Ban burning on peatlands, forcing a rethink about upland land use and potentially investment in other uses;
6. Ban commercial peat extraction for horticulture and the sale of peat for horticultural use.
7. Ensure all homes have access to broadband to enable working and schooling from home
8. Ensuring a healthier, fairer and more sustainable food system

Policy reform

The Scottish Government should carry out strategic reviews of policy areas with high impacts on emissions, and ensure that policies are designed to facilitate a Just Transition.

On food, they should develop an integrated food policy based on Just Transition principles. This should read across production and consumption, health, environment and waste to ensure that everyone in Scotland can access and afford a healthy sustainable diet. Farmers will need support to transition to ecologically sustainable techniques while maintaining good livelihoods. Food businesses will need help to change products, supply chains, menus; and implement circular economy models.

Policy coherence

The Scottish Government must ensure there is coherence between its domestic policy and global sustainable development outcomes, and fulfil commitments to the Paris Agreement and Sustainable Development Goals.

There must also be cross-departmental coherence at a domestic level to ensure that climate change and social justice are given as much prominence in decision-making as economic impact is given currently.

In 2019 the Scottish Government committed to launching a new Inter-Ministerial Group on Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD). It has yet to hold its inaugural meeting, but the broad, cross-portfolio implications of COVID-19 and climate change mean that such a group would be perfectly placed to ensure that people and climate are at the heart of Scotland's recovery, and its work with the global community. We urge the government to launch the group and place climate change high on its agenda.

Are there specific groups or communities that may be, or feel that they may be adversely affected by a transition to a net-zero carbon economy? What steps can be taken to address their concerns? *137 of max 500 words*

It is essential that we rebuild our economies in a way that protects the most vulnerable, and ensures we fulfil our commitments to the Paris Agreement, Sustainable Development Goals and to those in the global south who are already paying a heavy price for our historic emissions.

At home

Measures to support those working in fossil-fuel intense industries – whose jobs will need to change – and associated supply chains, are set out elsewhere in our response.

Many people (particularly in wealthier demographics) may feel that they are being compelled unfairly into changing their behaviours – for example, by measures to disincentivise private car ownership. Clear messaging will be required to ensure that those who benefit the most from the current economic system understand how we will all benefit from moving to a more just and equitable society.

Internationally

Policy coherence principles can ensure better outcomes in the poorest countries and better sustainable development outcomes here in Scotland. Those in the global south urgently require a swift transition to a zero-carbon economy. However, the transition must be sensitive to the economic needs of these countries, to avoid unintended negative impacts.

PCSD is about responding to the multiple crises we face in a systematic way. It ensures different parts of government work together to achieve the most effective outcomes domestically and internationally. The broad, cross-portfolio implications of climate change requires such a response. For this reason, the Inter-Ministerial Group on PCSD is perfectly placed to ensure that people and the planet are at the heart of Scotland's transition.

Please provide here any other information, evidence, or research you consider relevant to the work of the Commission.

A recent paper on how to achieve a net-zero emissions economic recovery¹ emphasises how fiscal multipliers associated with government spending are greater during recessions, such as

¹ Allan, J., Donovan, C., Ekins, P., Gambhir, A., Hepburn, C., Robins, N., Reay, D., Shuckburgh E., and Zenghelis, D. (2020). A net-zero emissions economic recovery from COVID-19. Smith School Working Paper 20-01. See: <https://www.smithschool.ox.ac.uk/publications/wpapers/workingpaper20-01.pdf>.

the one we now face. Analyses of the responses to the financial crisis of 2008/2009 show that expansionary policies focussed on investment were more effective at restarting economic activity than austerity-based policies.

A recent survey of 231 central bank officials, finance ministry officials, and other economic experts from G20 countries on the relative performance of 25 major fiscal recovery options revealed a strong belief from these experts that green fiscal policies are preferable². This research concluded that: *“Green fiscal recovery packages can act to decouple economic growth from GHG emissions and reduce existing welfare inequalities that will be exacerbated by the pandemic in the short-term and climate change in the long-term”*.

The Just Transition Partnership has written a briefing ["The Just Transition Challenge in Scotland"](#) which is extensive and contains advice to the government on how to achieve

- Environmentally and socially sustainable jobs, sectors and economies;
- Resource efficient and sustainable economic approaches which help address inequality and poverty;
- Low carbon investment and infrastructure and to create decent, fair and high value work.

² Hepburn, C., O’Callaghan, B., Stern, N., Stiglitz, J., and Zenghelis, D. (2020), ‘Will COVID-19 fiscal recovery packages accelerate or retard progress on climate change?’, Smith School Working Paper 20-02. See: <https://www.smithschool.ox.ac.uk/publications/wpapers/workingpaper20-02.pdf>.