SCCS response to 'Net Zero Nation: A Draft Public Engagement Strategy for Climate Change'

Our approach

a) What are your views on the three objectives underpinning our approach to engagement on climate change?

Overall, we believe that the three objectives set out are unsatisfactory, lacking targets, timeframes, the ability to measure and a mention of delivery of action.

Throughout the draft strategy, there is a welcome recognition of the scale of the transformations that we need to see if we are to reach net zero emissions before 2045, as well as an acknowledgement of the need for rapid advances in the extent to which people from all sections of society understand, relate to and actively participate in action to reduce emissions. However, it is strongly our belief that the scale and speed of action needed for Scottish Government to meet its Net Zero ambition requires Government leadership and ownership of this problem. Underlying these objectives is a sense that Scottish Government is expecting the public to address the issue with their own behaviour change - the "public" made up only 1.1MtCO$_2$e[1] in 2018, whilst "Business" made up 8.4. Energy Generation and Agriculture are also significant. It is important that the public taking action on climate change is not isolated and that these other (greater) issues are addressed at a public policy level. Most of the comments we set out in this response, then, focus on the question of whether the policy actions set out in the rest of the strategy are likely to prove sufficient to realise these objectives.

b) Do you think that any of these objectives should be removed or changed?

The objectives could be improved by including

- **Greater specificity about who is being targeted and how ("People" is very vague, not all groups approach this in the same way, and some groups need to do more than others)**
- **Greater specificity around the actions that are being encouraged (some actions are more impactful than others)**
- **A clear timeframe for the delivery or review of these objectives and criteria that they can be assessed against.**
- **A focus on achieving, rather than encouraging, action**

We believe that the order in which the objectives are set out in the draft strategy would more accurately reflect where the primary challenges facing us now lie in this area if Objective Three on *Encouraging Action* took the place of Objective One on *Communicating Climate Change* as the strategy's primary objective.

As shown in Annex B to the strategy, public awareness of climate change and action to tackle it has increased considerably since the Scottish Government's previous

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[1] https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-greenhouse-gas-emissions-2018/pages/3/

public engagement strategy: large majorities of people in Scotland now both agree that *"climate change is an immediate and urgent problem,"* and say that they *"understand what actions they should take to help tackle climate change."* However, crucially - as the strategy also acknowledges - the evidence shows that this rise in awareness has not been accompanied by any comparable degree of emissions-reducing behavioural change amongst most of the public. This suggests that the primary challenge facing the Scottish Government today in its climate change public engagement lies in achieving the kind of individual and collective urgent climate action that is now widely recognised as being necessary, rather than the (quite successfully progressed) aim of raising public awareness of climate change.

We believe that changing the order of the objectives in the final strategy and affording a greater priority to *Achieving Action* instead of *Encouraging Action* would help ensure that the Scottish Government's climate change public engagement and communication reflects the increasing importance of effectively bringing about active public involvement with reducing emissions, and that it is therefore Objective Three which warrants the most energy and thinking from this point forward if the vision of the strategy to be fully realised. In addition to this, we believe that communication aimed at deepening public understanding of the climate emergency should be given a higher priority than what is currently identified as the main aim of Objective One (informing the public around what action the Scottish Government is taking in this area).

c) Are there any objectives that you think should be included that are currently missing?

Yes, the Government should set out an objective to ensure the public understands Net Sources of Scottish Greenhouse Gas Emissions.

There should also be a more clear cut objective of achieving (not just 'normalising' or 'encouraging') individual and collective climate action. For example, this could be 'Achieving urgent and effective action on climate change being taken/underway in all communities and places across Scotland'.

2. Principles

The following principles will be embedded throughout public engagement activity included within this strategy.

1. Positive

Our green recovery from COVID-19 and our transition to a net zero nation bring numerous opportunities with potential benefits to our health, wellbeing, and local communities. It is important that our public engagement includes a renewed focus on these opportunities and benefits, people have the opportunity to make a real difference and our engagement must highlight this. The actions required to combat,

and adapt to, climate change can create a better, and fairer, society for everyone. We are therefore committed to creating an uplifting vision which people can relate to, understand, and be motivated to achieve.

2. Putting People First

Decarbonising our nation will have a significant effect on people's lives, so it is crucial that we understand and respond to people's concerns, have an inclusive decision making process, and put people in Scotland at the forefront of everything that we do. A net zero nation is not possible without the support and contribution of our citizens. Communities are not bystanders in the transition but integral players in making it a success.

3. Dialogue

Conversations around climate change are essential to encourage positive social norms and dispel negative misconceptions. We are reassured by discussing these issues with those around us, knowing that climate change is a shared concern and that our combined actions are making a difference. This engagement is required for all of society, including those that will be most affected by the transition to net zero.

4. Just

Climate justice and a commitment to a just transition approach are integral to the Scottish Government's response to both mitigating and adapting to climate change. It is important to understand which communities and sectors are most likely to be affected by the transition and actively engage with these groups. Those most impacted by our changing climate have often contributed least to the problem, both domestically and internationally. Working with affected communities to design and deliver our transition to net zero will ensure we address climate change in way which is fair, and that reflects their circumstances and experiences.

5. Inclusive

Scotland is a nation of incredible diversity. It is important that this diversity is reflected in our transition to a net zero society and that we reach all sections of Scottish society and give them an equal say in their future. Our engagement approach will therefore be inclusive and accessible to all.

6. Evidence-Based

We will ensure that we engage with research, encouraging collaboration between experts and policy makers. An evidence-based approach will result in real and lasting social transformation. To that end, we will communicate research findings so that all members of the public can engage with the latest developments. By working in collaboration with experts, duplication can be avoided, gaps in research identified, and the evidence base expanded.

7. Open & Transparent

The Scottish Government is committed to being an Open Government with these values placed at the heart of our National Performance Framework. Regarding our

approach to climate change, we will be open and transparent to make sure people can see and understand our actions.

a) What are your views on our seven principles for public engagement set out above?

We welcome the seven principles for public engagement set out in the strategy and we hope that they guide the Scottish Government's activity in this area in the years ahead. We particularly support the principle of committing to a just transition approach to addressing the climate emergency both domestically and internationally, as well as the principles of Inclusivity and Putting People First. The value of the principles that inform the Scottish Government's own ISM model should be recognised and should be the starting point for any engagement with research and an evidence-based approach.

b) Do you think that any of these principles should be removed or changed?

No.

c) Are there any principles of good public engagement on climate change that you think are missing?

The principles underpinning the Scottish Government's existing ISM model for achieving change should be referenced.

3. Other comments

a) Do you have any other comments on our overall approach?

The Strategy currently states: "Some areas of climate change policy, such as heat decarbonisation, are reserved to the UK Government". Although many of the issues which affect the heat market (such as the gas network, electricity and oil) are reserved matters, heat regulation, energy efficiency and fuel poverty initiatives are devolved to the Scottish Parliament.

4. Green Recovery

What are your views on the opportunities and challenges for public engagement in the Green Recovery?

The pandemic has reinforced the importance of building a resilient society in which we all have the support we need to get through times of crisis, while also reinforcing the vital importance of doing all we can now to minimise the risk of a future in which runaway climate change causes humanity to have to live with an ever-accelerating frequency of destabilising shocks. As set out in the strategy, the effect of the pandemic on public opinion seems to have been to have increased overall levels of concern about the climate emergency, while at the same time pushing other

concerns such as public health and the economy more directly to the fore. We believe that the best response to this is a just and green recovery which highlights and maximises the extent to which a just transition to net zero can have far-reaching benefits which extend to these other areas of concern: for example, by generating high-quality and sustainable green jobs in areas such as renewable energy and native woodland creation, and that no communities are left behind.

In addition, the Scottish Government must ensure that the positive impacts of the pandemic with regards to behavioural change are retained and maximised in the long-term. The strategy highlights some of the positive short-term changes to have taken place, such as the rise in active travel and a reduction in food waste across the UK, and we welcome the strategy's aspirations in this respect. However, looking forward it is also crucial that the potentially negative impacts of the pandemic with regards to carbon-emitting behaviours - such as the possibility of a decline in use of public transport leading to a long-term increase in car usage in towns and cities - are mitigated against as far as possible. This clearly requires investment in public transport, but may require specific targeted messaging to rebuild confidence and passenger numbers.

Communicating Climate Change Policy

5) What are your views on our approach to communicating climate change policy?

We welcome the commitment to continuing to raise awareness of the climate emergency and the Scottish Government's response to it. We also welcome the commitment to working with others in this area, including the recognition that *"governments are often not the most suitable messenger when it comes to communicating policies to differing audiences"* and that civil society groups have a crucial role to play in this respect.

However, there are also areas with regards to which we believe the final strategy could usefully be altered or expanded. Firstly, as mentioned, given that the rise in awareness of the climate emergency has not yet translated into any widespread behavioural change, we would suggest that the final strategy place a greater emphasis on improving public understanding of the climate emergency, as opposed to simply increasing public awareness of the topic. While the latter remains important - particularly with respect to those sections of the population in which awareness remains relatively low - we would suggest that a more important aim at this point may be deepening the understanding of people in all parts of Scotland of key issues around the climate emergency; as well as improving our collective understanding of how we can best respond both as individuals and as a society.

Secondly, meanwhile, the strategy highlights the continuing disparity in the extent to which climate change is recognised as an immediate and urgent problem between adults of different levels of educational attainment, with only 49% adults in Scotland with no formal qualifications describing climate change in these terms compared to

80% of those with a degree.[2] We believe it is crucial that this disparity is addressed with urgency, and we would like to see the final strategy set out in greater detail the steps which the Scottish Government proposes to take to this effect.

6) Are you aware of any practical examples or case studies of good practice for communicating on climate change that could be useful for informing our approach?

Climate Outreach have undertaken some research on engaging the public with climate change - https://climateoutreach.org/reports/britain-talks-climate

There is also this research about how to tell impactful stories - https://www.onroadmedia.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Six-ways-to-change-hearts-and-minds-about-climate-change.pdf

These are specifically about communicating climate justice - https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qSGSzp_1El8SMpoD8Sz51pTkyJTMMJI_GNIc5puyg6g/edit

https://framingclimatejustice.org/

Enabling Participation in Policy Design

7) What are your views on our approach to enabling participation in policy design?

In order to facilitate and encourage stakeholder participation in policy design, stakeholders should be granted adequate time to provide feedback on government proposals, updates or new legislative initiatives. Whilst we appreciate Government is moving at a fast pace as demanded by the climate emergency, timely consultation with engaged stakeholders can help inform and shape policy, prevent missed opportunities and ensure robust policy development.

Participation also needs to be more meaningful, by giving communities a direct say over how we respond to the crisis. This can be really empowering and a more effective way of engaging them with the issue. Good examples of this can be found in citizens assemblies, participatory budgeting, Poverty Truth Commissions.

8) Are you aware of any practical examples or case studies of good practice for enabling participation in decision-making that could be useful for informing our approach?

Please see the response of our member SCCAN for examples of this.

Encouraging Action

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[2] Scottish Government (2020), *Scotland's People Annual Report 2019.* Pg. 25.

9) What are your views on our approach to encouraging action?

We welcome many aspects of the strategy's proposed approach to encouraging action. The aim of ensuring that climate action is normalised and encouraged in communities and places across Scotland is a positive one but the underpinning aim of, not just 'encouraging' or 'normalising' action but 'achieving' it should be spelt out. We welcome the commitment to supporting the key messengers who are most trusted by the audiences the Scottish Government most needs to reach - including the half of adults in Scotland with no formal qualifications who do not yet view climate change as an immediate and urgent problem.

However, there are also areas where we would like to see more detail in the final strategy regarding how the Scottish Government hopes to achieve action. In particular, community climate action has a key role to play in involving people and communities from all parts of Scotland with our transition to net zero emissions. While the strategy confirms the Scottish Government will *"continue to champion and fund community-led climate action"*, there is no detail in the strategy as to what level and types of funding community groups in Scotland will be able to access in the years ahead to support local action to cut emissions. It is important that funding for community action includes workplaces, which it did some years ago. Trade unions are keen to help achieve workplace action and wider understanding of contributions there to mitigation and adaptation. Many people first became used to, for example, recycling and some energy saving measures through their work and then brought that approach home. Far more can be done to encourage and achieve behaviour change in workplaces, whether through this type of funding or a dedicated fund.

We believe the final strategy, then, should include a clear commitment to at the very least maintaining the overall levels of funding put towards supporting community climate action in previous years. We also believe the final strategy should set out the steps that will be taken to ensure that support is available to as wide and diverse a range of groups as possible, for example by introducing new, smaller strands of funding which are longer-term and easier to access. Finally, in view of the societal inequalities in climate awareness mentioned above, we believe the final strategy should set out in some more detail the specific steps the Scottish Government will take or encourage to ensure that disadvantaged communities across Scotland are as involved as possible with climate action in the years to come.

Whilst it is well understood that there are varying emission impacts of various consumption habits (food, and meat consumption being a prime example) there is nothing in this section about encouraging consumer action. Small additional costs have been shown to be highly impactful in changing consumer behaviour (e.g. the plastic bag surcharge) as has additional information provided on packaging (e.g. nutrition labelling rules). Clearly there is no parallel at present, whether that is for food or other products associated with emissions (fuels, garden peat, timber, etc.). This should be explored.

10) Are you aware of any practical examples or case studies of good practice for encouraging climate change action that could be useful for informing our approach?

A wide range of examples of community-led groups and projects which have proved highly effective in inspiring local climate action are available amongst the [SCCAN membership](#) and in Keep Scotland Beautiful's [selection of case studies](#) of Climate Challenge Fund projects. The Climate Challenge Programme Malawi (CCPM), funded by the Climate Justice Fund, also includes inspiring youth-led activities that promote local climate change awareness and action.

COP26

11) How do you think COP26 can help deliver a positive legacy for people of Scotland and climate action?

Voices from Scotland must be heard - 68% of adults in Scotland agree that climate change is an immediate and urgent problem. We must also listen to the voices of communities in the global south, who are the most affected by the climate emergency. We will never have a greater opportunity to influence global climate action and it's time to seize it by taking strong action to cut domestic emissions and standing in solidarity with and championing the issues raised by the countries who did least to cause the crisis but are suffering the worst impacts. By using the spotlight that COP being in Glasgow brings, Scottish Government can take the opportunity to truly set itself as a leader in climate action, benefiting the wellbeing, health and job prospects for people in Scotland. For more information on what we want to see at COP26 read our paper - https://www.stopclimatechaos.scot/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Delivering-climate-justice-at-COP26.pdf

12) How can we work with stakeholders and actors across Scotland to deliver our "people" theme for COP26.

We believe that this theme presents an excellent opportunity for the Scottish Government to work with stakeholders to arrange a showcase of examples of community climate action currently taking place across different parts of Scotland. The Scottish Government should do whatever it can to make sure that spaces are available for diverse groups and organisations to take part at COP26 to make sure the voices of diverse communities are meaningfully heard.

We also believe that the Scottish Government should hold the Glasgow Climate Dialogues ahead of COP26. The Dialogues should be a series of pre-COP discussions with representatives from the global south, and will provide opportunity to explore and to engage on some of the priority issues for those most affected by the climate emergency. By holding the talks in advance of COP26, it will provide an opportunity for key stakeholders from the global south to share their positions on some of the key negotiating points at the Conference. These talks would provide a

helpful platform to add depth to existing Scottish Government commitments to champion global south at COP26, and will show strong leadership in climate justice.

13) Are there other initiatives that the Scottish Government should consider joining or supporting ahead of COP26?

Scotland is currently Co-European Chair of the Under2 Coalition, which includes more than 220 sub-national governments, cities and states who are not direct parties to the UNFCCC. Scotland should explore the opportunities this offers and set out a clear strategy for how it will engage with the Under2 Coalition.

Monitoring and Evaluation

14) What are your views on how our progress towards our objectives could be most effectively monitored and evaluated?

We believe that setting up a steering and monitoring group to support the strategy would be one way of effectively monitoring progress towards the strategy's objectives. This group could involve representatives from the wide range of civil society organisations that have a part to play in delivering upon the strategy's objectives, and would ensure that the Scottish Government has access to good advice from those with expertise in this area, including amongst the SCCS membership. Finally, such a group would also help provide a greater level of accountability with regards to the Scottish Government's engagement with the public around the climate emergency, and help ensure that there is a consistently high level of engagement with key stakeholders running through the Government's activities in this area in the years ahead.

15) How regularly – and in what format – should we report on progress on the strategy?

We believe that progress towards the strategy's objectives should be reported on a yearly basis, perhaps through the publication of an annual document summarising key achievements and setting out plans for the year ahead. In addition to this, the Scottish Government could provide a more regular commentary on progress in this area via social media, to enable the public and interested groups to keep up to date with new plans and actions as and when they develop.