



## Stop Climate Chaos Scotland Briefing for plenary debate on COP26 Action and Ambition

### Summary

This briefing has been prepared for MSPs in advance of the debate in Scottish Government time, on 27<sup>th</sup> October, on "COP26 Action and Ambition".

The national and international policy context, in relation to climate change, is described, especially the nature of the current crisis and the decisions to be taken at, and around the forthcoming COP26 in Glasgow. It also sets out the Scottish Government's current actions, proposed actions and further steps that are necessary to both meet our climate change targets, and to engage effectively and credibly at COP26.

### Introduction

[Stop Climate Chaos Scotland](#) ("SCCS") is a diverse coalition of over 60 civil society organisations in Scotland who campaign together on climate change. Our members include environment, faith and belief groups, international development organisations, trade and student unions and community groups. We believe that the Scottish Government should take bold action to tackle climate change, with Scotland delivering our fair share of action in response to the Paris Agreement and supporting climate justice around the world.

The debate on 27<sup>th</sup> October is an important opportunity to highlight, ahead of COP26 in Glasgow, the issues that need to be addressed. These include both the outcomes of COP26, and the actions needed by both the UK and Scottish Governments to meet their respective net-zero commitments and to provide leadership to the international community.

To assist you prepare for this debate, this briefing seeks to describe the policy context as well as potential issues that might be raised with Ministers. As a coalition of NGOs working in Scotland, this briefing, for a Scottish Parliament debate, is focused on matters that are the responsibility of the Scottish Government.

### National and international context

The primary context is, of course, the ongoing climate crisis. The planet is already over 1°C warmer and on track for a devastating 3°C or more - there is no more time to waste. Climate change is affecting the world's poorest people now and fuelling a linked nature crisis.

In August 2021, hundreds of [scientists from the IPCC issued the starkest warning yet](#) about human impact on the planet amid unprecedented changes, including more intense heatwaves and more extreme weather events, with some changes now inevitable and irreversible. The UN Secretary General branded the findings a "[code red for humanity](#)". The science is now overwhelming: our planet is on fire and without concerted action we're headed towards climate catastrophe; with the poorest communities – wherever they live – and future generations suffering the most.

It is, however, not too late to limit global temperature rise to the critical 1.5°C threshold, as agreed at Paris, but the decisions we take over the next few years are crucial. For Scotland, **the key decisions will be the steps that the UK and**



## Scottish Governments take in the run-up to and following COP26 in Glasgow.

To inform these, SCCS has published a briefing on "[Delivering climate justice at COP26 in Glasgow](#)", which sets out the steps we believe need to be taken by the UK and Scottish Governments to seize Scotland's unique opportunity to shape global action. A summary is available [here](#). This suggests that: -

"The Scottish Government must implement the transformational policy and spending actions needed to deliver Scotland's legal emission targets, without international offsets, and ensure a just transition. It should also use its relatively strong record, and Glasgow's status as COP26 host city, to push other historical polluters towards actions consistent with limiting global temperature rises to 1.5°C, including using its prominent role within the Under2 Coalition to show international leadership."

To deliver such a transformation, SCCS believes that the Scottish Government will need to interact with COP26 to encourage Member States to agree a progressive outcome, by: -

- (a) highlighting its relatively positive positions, especially on targets; and
- (b) underlining its commitments to do more.

### Climate change policies for Scotland

While Scotland's emissions have halved since 1990, and they continue to fall, Scotland's credibility is now in significant jeopardy due to it missing annual targets. In June, [the Cabinet Secretary confirmed](#) that the annual target for 2019 was missed; this was the third of three successive annual targets missed. In the same statement, the Cabinet Secretary also promised "*we will also urgently develop a catch-up report on the missed 2019 target and aim to publish it in six months at the very latest.*" This report is due imminently and must include robust actions to remedy the slow pace of emissions reductions.

He also said, "*the next full climate change plan should also be brought forward as soon as possible*". This is reflected in the [Programme for Government](#) which states "*we will set out the process to deliver a draft of the next Climate Change Plan for consideration in the first half of this parliamentary session.*"

To achieve Scotland's 75% emissions reduction target by 2030, en route to net zero by 2045, it is clear that Scotland must accelerate climate action while delivering a just transition for those impacted. This will need an ambitious and detailed long-term strategy to meet these targets, without the use of international offsets and with an emphasis on emission reduction at source. This is critical both to meet targets at home, but also to provide credibility to the Scottish Government's advocacy to others.

In particular, action – which must be set out in the "catch-up report" and/or the revised Climate Change Plan - is required in following areas:

- **Energy:** Deliver 100% renewable electricity generation for a fully decarbonised system by 2032.
- **Oil & gas:** Burning oil and gas is a significant contribution to our emissions and what, if any, new or existing reserves should be extracted/burnt needs to be examined carefully in the light of Net Zero targets. The proposed Government review of the Oil and Gas policy in Scotland needs to address the current contradictions in policy. In particular, it is clear that approving a proposed new oil field, such as Cambo, would contradict the findings of the International Energy Agency which has said that to meet global net zero by 2050, there can be "no new oil and gas fields approved for development".



- **Buildings:** The Scottish Government's [Heat in Buildings Strategy](#) suggests that “a large majority of buildings should achieve a good level of energy efficiency by 2030, equivalent to EPC C for homes, with homes meeting at least this standard by 2033, and that all buildings have zero emissions heating systems by 2045”. This is welcome; however, it is important that the funding, information, and logistics are in place to ensure this is delivered.
- **Transport:** Switch capital expenditure from road building to low-carbon infrastructure, as per the sustainable travel hierarchy. We welcome the Government's commitment to devote at least 10% of the transport budget to active travel (although this does need to be delivered as soon as possible), as well as action to expand concessionary bus travel and disincentivise high-emitting options. There is also a need to provide additional support for local authorities to deliver active travel measures at speed.
- **Circular economy:** Cut consumption and waste by investing in recycling infrastructure, banning single-use plastics where practical reusable alternatives exist and introducing charges for single-use disposable cups.
- **Protect and enhance our land and seas:** Invest in proven practices to foster healthy ecosystems and enhance biodiversity, leading to reduced carbon emissions and increased adaptive resilience, such as peatland restoration and flourishing native woodlands on land. At sea, progress is needed to establish a spatial management system for inshore fisheries to protect habitats and blue carbon.
- **Food, farming and fishing systems:** Target support at regenerative practises and systems that benefit people, communities, and the environment. Introduce a plan for food, farming and fishing in Scotland with climate and nature at its heart, reviewed on a five-year cycle.
- **Just Transition:** Critically, we must phase out our most polluting activities while supporting those impacted, by creating new, quality job opportunities in green industries. We must rebuild a more resilient, green economy by meeting the Just Transition Commission's challenge to “[move beyond the rhetoric of just transition](#)”, both within a Just Transition Action Plan and by placing a green recovery at the core of Scotland's economic strategy.
- **Negative Emissions Technologies:** The current CCP/CCPu places considerable reliance on so-called Negative Emissions Technologies (NETs). SCCS is sceptical about the scale of this reliance as NETs have yet to be proven at the scale needed. The forthcoming review of the CCP must, if NETs are to be relied on, at least provide considerably stronger evidence that this is justified, or include a so-called 'Plan B'.

Further details on the land use, Scotland's seas, transport, economy and energy issues, and NETs are set out in the annex to this briefing.

#### International Climate Justice

Alongside rapidly reducing domestic emissions, to deliver climate justice Scotland can lead by example. The issues and opportunities for Scotland in relation to Climate Justice were illustrated by the discussion at the [Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee on Thursday 30 September](#), as well as in written evidence submitted to that Committee.

SCCS welcomes the Scottish Government's Climate Justice Fund, and its announcement that [it will be increased to £6 million per year](#) across this Parliament. However, SCCS considers that [the Climate Justice Fund should increase](#) in real terms across the course of the parliament and, of course, get to the people who need it most. This should be made possible by raising new and additional funding through taxing high emitters and aligning it to best practice in adaptation globally. The



Scottish Government should also call for other rich countries to increase their own climate finance informed by a Fair Shares analysis, and champion for this to be additional to Overseas Development Assistance (ODA). Such “[para-diplomacy](#)” is consistent with Scotland’s devolved responsibilities and is illustrated by the Scottish Government’s role as European co-chair of the Under2 coalition.

It should encourage all countries to deliver on the \$100bn pledge this year and, given historic international neglect for adaptation, it should also support a specific new global public finance goal for the period after 2025. It should press for action to strengthen the decision-making power of, and direct implementation by, affected people and communities through improved access to high-quality adaptation finance.

These issues were explored in the [Glasgow Climate Dialogues](#), co-hosted by SCCS and the Scottish Government. The [final communiqué](#) summarised the outputs of the four Dialogues, which were specifically designed to amplify the priorities of experts from the global South, covering: Access, Participation and Voice; Adaptation and Resilience; Loss and Damage; and Just Transition. The communiqué contains important messages for all those negotiating at COP26. SCCS is very grateful that these Dialogues and the communiqué have been recognised in [a Parliamentary motion](#) from Fiona Hyslop MSP; this motion has secured cross-party support. The Scottish Government must place the priorities of climate-impacted communities in the Global South – as identified within the Glasgow Climate Dialogues – at the core of its messaging for COP26 in Glasgow.

Within the limits of devolved competencies, the Scottish Government is showing strong leadership by increasing the Climate Justice Fund and by ensuring this remains additional to wider international development funding. It should build on this by championing the global need for a new finance mechanism on loss and damage.

### Conclusion

In the light of the widely agreed climate emergency, COP26 represents a vital opportunity for world leaders to agree to the necessary action. In Scotland, the Scottish Government has adopted a welcome position – with clear and ambitious targets for emissions’ reductions, welcome language related to a just transition as well as action to promote climate justice. However, **delivery has not always matched ambitions**. With three successive years of missed annual targets, decisive action is needed to ensure that targets – and the ambitions of COP26 – can be achieved.

In the light of this, this debate might be used to ask the Scottish Government:

- What steps are the Scottish Government taking to work with the UK and other governments to promote a positive outcome to COP26?
- What steps are the Scottish Government before or at COP26 to underline and enhance its own policies and actions, both domestically and internationally?
- In particular, when will the promised “catch-up report” be published, and what actions will this pledge to ensure that Scotland’s emissions decline at the rate required by our targets?
- When will the Scottish Government outline the process that will result in an updated “*Climate Change Plan for consideration in the first half of this parliamentary session*” and when will that process begin?



## ANNEX

### **Key areas for consideration: some policy developments necessary to contribute to a clear, progressive, and ambitious programme of action on climate change.**

#### Land use

The land is the largest source and the biggest sink of greenhouse gas emissions in Scotland. Land use and management will therefore be central to reaching Net Zero by 2045. It is vital that policies and funding are put in place to reduce emissions from the land and increase the sequestration of carbon from the atmosphere.

Under established reporting categories Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) is reported as emitting 2.7 MtCO<sub>2</sub>e. This is, however, a 'net' figure that masks large emissions and large removals. Emissions from land in 2019 were estimated to be 14.2 MtCO<sub>2</sub>e, whilst the removal of carbon from the atmosphere (e.g., through tree planting) was estimated to be -11.5 MtCO<sub>2</sub>e. The emissions were larger than removals, hence the small net source of emissions from the LULUCF sector. Emissions from land are actually the largest single source of emissions. The fact that land/land management also removes carbon in some places should not obscure the fact that land is still the largest source of emissions in other places.

Further observations and comments on policy changes necessary in regard to land use were set out in the SCCS submissions, on the CCPu, to the previous Parliament's Committees (especially those [to the REC Committee](#) and [to the ECCLR Committee](#)).

#### Scotland's seas

As well as land, there is an enormous carbon store, as well as opportunity for further sequestration, in Scotland's seas. This is often described as "blue carbon". Collectively, Scotland's blue carbon environment store is roughly equivalent to the total of carbon stored in Scotland's land-based ecosystems such as peatlands, forestry and soils. Annually, Scotland's blue carbon stores sequester approximately three times more than the annual carbon sequestration of Scottish Forestry. These data, as well as the need for further action on protection and further sequestration are set out in [the SPICe briefing on blue carbon](#).

The current CCP and CCPu are disappointing in their treatment of the marine environment. This concern was set out in the SCCS submissions, on the CCPu, to the previous Parliament's [ECCLR Committee](#). Action is now needed to, at least, include blue carbon habitats within the Greenhouse Gas inventory and ensure that fisheries are not causing a serious net loss of blue carbon through damage to those habitats.

#### Transport

##### *Reducing car kilometres by 20% by 2030*

In the Climate Change Plan update the Scottish Government committed to reducing car usage (measure in kilometres) by 20% by 2030. Details of how this target was arrived at, whether it is sufficient, and how much emission abatement it would provide are not, as yet, available. While welcome, policies or proposed actions to meet this target across Scotland are also not yet available.

##### *20-minute neighbourhoods*

The Government plans for 20-minute neighbourhoods are welcome. However, greater detail is needed to understand the advantages of this policy and how they



can be best introduced into Scotland. In particular we believe that it would be helpful to explore some of the existing barriers to implementation. This could draw on lessons learned from the “Spaces for People” initiative (see below).

#### *Learning from Spaces for People*

We support the ‘Spaces for People’ initiative and would welcome a review of the lessons that can be learnt from it as we seek to improve active travel infrastructure. Particular questions might include:

- How was the money spent by Local Authorities and what was the impact?
- What barriers did Local Authorities experience to implementation – internal and external?
- How can Local Authorities be encouraged to make Spaces for People measures permanent, and ensure long-term benefits?
- What lessons can be learnt for speedy creation of active travel infrastructure in the future, particularly regarding public buy-in?

#### *Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR2)*

We are aware that the plans for STPR2 will be published this autumn and will inform transport investment in Scotland for the next 20 years. Measures in STPR2 must be sufficient to reduce climate emissions from transport and help meet the objectives in the National Transport Strategy. Consideration should also be given to whether the Government should go further and faster in financing projects which support low and zero carbon transport options. Further detail is also needed on the substance and long-term funding of a Scotland-wide active freeway network, as committed to in the Programme for Government.

Further observations and comments on policy changes necessary in regard to transport matters were set out in the [SCCS submission to the previous Parliament’s REC Committee](#) on the CCPu.

#### Economy and energy

The SCCS submissions, on the CCPu, to the previous Parliament’s Committees (especially those [to the EEFW Committee](#) (energy and green recovery) and [to the ECCLR Committee](#) (circular economy and green recovery) provide observations and comments on the policy changes necessary for the economy and energy issues.

#### *Oil and gas*

The recent Scottish Government/Scottish Green Party [Shared Policy Programme](#) includes a review of the Oil and Gas industry in Scotland. This review needs to address the current contradictions in policy – and develop proposals for a just transition away from oil and gas.

#### *Energy strategy*

The Scottish Government's current energy strategy states that: -

*“There are still significant opportunities in the North Sea, with up to 20 billion barrels of oil equivalent remaining – which could sustain production for at least another 20 years. That is why we continue to support Maximising Economic Recovery from the North Sea. We will go on working constructively with the industry, to encourage new exploration in the North Sea”*

The proposed review (see above) is required as this approach is incompatible with Scotland's emissions reductions targets. Burning oil and gas is a significant contribution to our emissions and what, if any, new or existing reserves should be extracted/burnt needs to be examined carefully in the light of Net Zero targets.



Currently, 24% of all the energy used in Scotland comes from renewables and the 2017 Energy Strategy sets a target for “*the equivalent of 50% of the energy for Scotland’s heat, transport and electricity consumption to be supplied from renewable sources*”. However, the energy strategy was written when our climate targets were for 66% reductions by 2030 and only 80% by 2050. The 2019 Climate Act updated targets to 75% by 2030 and net-zero by 2045. The energy strategy and its renewables target should be reviewed and revised in the light of new climate targets.

#### *Circular economy*

We note that the Scottish Government/Scottish Green Party’s [Shared Policy Programme](#) refers to an “ambition to advance Scotland’s circular economy” and to a “Circular Economy Bill later in this parliamentary session”. This is a welcome development and offers an additional opportunity to enhance the legislative framework for delivering climate change ambitions.

#### Negative emissions technologies

The current CCP/CCPu places considerable reliance on so-called Negative Emissions Technologies (NETs). SCCS is sceptical about the scale of this reliance as NETs have yet to be proven at the scale needed.

In response to submissions, including those from SCCS, the [ECCLR Committee in the previous Parliament recommended](#) that the Government: -

*“reviews the abatement potential and schedule associated with the planned NETs in the CCPu in light of concerns about the achievability of these commitments [and] develops and costs a Plan B for abatement dependent on operational NETs in the timescale to 2032” (paras 176-177).*

The [Government response](#) to this was to simply reiterate their confidence that “we will be able to deliver NETS within the timeframe”. Given the uncertainties and scepticism expressed by a number of witnesses and in evidence submitted to the previous Parliament, which led to the above recommendation, SCCS considers that the forthcoming review of the CCP must, if NETs are to be relied on, provide considerably stronger evidence that this is justified.