



SNP leadership candidates
Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh EH99 1SP

3rd March 2023

Dear Kate Forbes MSP, Ash Regan MSP and Humza Yousaf MSP,

We are writing on behalf of the Stop Climate Chaos Scotland and Scottish Environment LINK coalitions, together representing over 100 members and around 1.5 million people. On behalf of our coalitions and members, we are seeking your strong and public commitment that, if you become Scotland's next First Minister, you will prioritise tackling the climate and nature crises and lead the bold action urgently needed to reduce emissions, protect and restore biodiversity, champion climate justice and lead a Just Transition away from fossil fuels.

Scotland is seen by many as a leader on these issues, and can be rightly proud of positive actions that have been taken under the current First Minister's leadership. We have been pleased to work alongside the Scottish Government, providing platforms and campaigning to help encourage progress. Particular achievements include:

- Passing the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019 legislation with cross party support which set some of the most ambitious climate targets in the world;
- Providing international leadership through the Edinburgh Declaration on Biodiversity, and acknowledging the importance of tackling the climate and nature crises together;
- Acknowledging the need for climate reparations and being the first nation to commit finance to help address climate change-induced Loss and Damage;
- Starting the process to plan for a Just Transition for workers and communities; and
- Moving away from a policy to maximise oil and gas recovery from the North Sea.

Progress to reduce Scotland's emissions is being made, but nowhere near fast enough: seven of the last 11 emission reduction targets have been missed, and the Scottish Government's independent climate advisers warn that the target framework is "in danger of becoming meaningless"¹. It is essential that these legal targets are met, in order for Scotland to reduce as much additional harm as possible and to demonstrate how to transition fairly to a thriving low carbon economy and society. Similarly, progress on preventing and reversing nature loss has been far too slow.²

The Committee on Climate Change has also voiced strong concern about the lack of a clear emissions delivery plan, highlighting that Scotland has begun to lose its lead on climate over the rest of the UK. This trajectory cannot continue, with the UN warning that the crucial goal of keeping temperature increases below 1.5 degrees is "on life support"³ and with devastating extreme weather events becoming more frequent, fuelling increased poverty and hunger. Scotland must therefore renew and deepen its global climate leadership.

Whoever becomes Scotland's next First Minister can do this by implementing solutions to reduce emissions at pace in ways that can also deliver improvements to health, build more resilient energy and food systems, protect and restore biodiversity, create sustainable jobs, and result in a fairer and

¹ <https://www.theccc.org.uk/2022/12/07/scotlands-climate-targets-are-in-danger-of-becoming-meaningless/>

² <https://www.scotlink.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/From-Rhetoric-to-Reality-Revisited-FINAL.pdf>

³ <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/09/1127381>

more equal society. There are numerous upcoming opportunities to drive action, including:

- The Scottish Government's **Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan**, which must adopt an unequivocal stance against any new oil and gas licences in the North Sea. Moving away from fossil fuels is key to tackling both the cost-of-living and climate crises, and every devolved lever must be used to fairly accelerate the move towards clean and more reliable energy and employment.⁴ Recent polling shows that 70% of SNP voters support a move away from fossil fuels as "quickly as possible" by ramping up efforts to improve energy efficiency and developing more renewable energy.⁵
- The new **Climate Change Plan** must embed transformative policies across all sectors to ensure Scotland's 2030 and 2045 emission reduction targets are met. Policies must be delivered to reduce car use, reform rural support to encourage climate and nature friendly farming and to hugely increase investment in home energy efficiency and cleaner heating. We agree with the current First Minister, who recently said that this document will be "one of the most important to be published over the period ahead"⁶.
- The **introduction of statutory targets for nature**, mirroring existing targets for climate, will be an important demonstration of intent. Targets must be accompanied by ambitious action on the drivers of nature loss, including radical changes to land use and a significantly reformed system of agricultural support. The Scottish Government has committed to taking a series of vital measures to protect and restore our natural environment, on land and at sea, however Scotland has suffered one of the highest rates of historic nature loss in the world and faces growing threats to our biodiversity. The next First Minister must confirm commitments to delivering the global ambitions in the **Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework**.

Sustained new investment is required to tackle the climate and nature emergencies, and the Scottish Government must therefore review all fiscal measures available to it, to raise new and additional sources of finance. Devolved tax and spending powers must be used progressively to drive faster change and contribute to international climate justice, whilst also tackling the source of emissions and the cost of living crisis at home, by ensuring that the biggest polluters pay the most.

People in Scotland are greatly concerned about tackling climate change and protecting nature. We urge you to commit now that if you are elected as the next leader of the SNP, and subsequently appointed First Minister, you will deliver the transformational changes needed to tackle the climate and nature crises, renewing and deepening Scotland's status as a credible climate champion both at home and internationally.

Yours sincerely,



Mike Robinson
Chair, Stop Climate Chaos Scotland



Deborah Long
Chief Officer, Scottish Environment LINK



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<https://www.stopclimatechaos.scot/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/SCCS-briefing-a-managed-wind-down-of-North-Sea-oil-and-gas-production-in-line-with-a-Just-Transition.pdf>

⁵ <https://news.stv.tv/scotland/next-first-minister-must-prioritise-move-away-from-oil-and-gas-campaigners-say>

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<https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/official-report/search-what-was-said-in-parliament/meeting-of-parliament-23-02-2023?meeting=14159&job=128257>

With the support of the following organisations:

- Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland
- Bat Conservation Trust
- Bumblebee Conservation Trust
- Changeworks
- Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management
- Christian Aid Scotland
- Circular Communities Scotland
- Community Energy Scotland
- Eco-congregation Scotland
- Energy Agency
- Environmental Rights Centre for Scotland
- Friends of the Earth Scotland
- Fidra
- Froglife
- Global Justice Now
- Humanist Society Scotland
- Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust
- John Muir Trust
- Keep Scotland Beautiful
- Jubilee Scotland
- Marine Conservation Society
- Nature Foundation
- North East Mountain Trust
- Nourish Scotland
- Open Seas Trust
- Oxfam Scotland
- Planning Democracy
- Plantlife
- Quakers in Scotland
- RSPB Scotland
- Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund
- Scotland's International Development Alliance
- Scottish Community Alliance
- Scottish Communities Climate Action Network
- Scottish Countryside Rangers Association
- Scottish Seabird Centre
- Scottish Wild Land Group
- Scottish Wildlife Trust
- Spokes
- Soil Association Scotland
- South Seeds
- Sustrans Scotland
- Tearfund
- Trees for Life
- Unison Scotland
- Woodland Trust Scotland
- WWF Scotland



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 Scottish Environment LINK is a Scottish Charity, no SC000296