



Climate and the UK General election: A briefing from Stop Climate Chaos Scotland

Stop Climate Chaos Scotland (SCCS) is a diverse coalition of over 60 civil society organisations campaigning together on climate change in Scotland. We believe that the UK and Scottish Governments should take bold action to tackle climate change, with Scotland delivering our fair share of action to limit global temperature rises to 1.5 degrees, championing international climate justice and inspiring others to act.

Context

From devastating droughts to catastrophic floods, the impact of the spiralling climate crisis could not be clearer, and those with the least responsibility for causing rising global temperatures are facing the most severe - and deadly - consequences.

The UN Secretary General, António Guterres, recently said: *'humanity is on thin ice — and that ice is melting fast.'* He called on the world's nations to *'massively fast-track climate efforts by every country and every sector and on every time frame.'* Similarly, Lord Deben, the former chair of the Committee on Climate Change (CCC), has said: *'our children will not forgive us if we leave them a world of withering heat and devastating storms where sea level rises and extreme temperatures force millions to move because their countries are no longer habitable. None of us can avoid our responsibility. Delay is not an option.'* If the climate emergency is to be taken seriously, we require a step change - with more action across every sector and at an accelerated scale and speed.

Climate policy in UK and Scotland

The UK and Scotland have, in the past, been among the global leaders on climate. When the UK and Scottish Climate Change Acts were first passed, they were 'world-leading'. The Scottish Government has also championed international action and committed funds to climate justice and to Loss & Damage. These steps are welcome.

However, the UK Government's Net Zero Strategy, intended to set a path to meeting emissions' reduction targets, has been described as ['feeble and inadequate'](#) and recent announcements, amounting to a roll-back on commitments, were [criticised by the CCC](#). In Scotland, the emissions targets have been missed in eight of the last twelve years and the Scottish Government's own monitoring shows we are off track for our 2030 and 2045 targets.

To rise to the emergency, to meet our targets to achieve net zero, through a just transition, and support the poorest, most affected communities, stronger and faster action is necessary by both the UK and Scottish Governments.

In relation to Scottish Government action, SCCS' focus is currently focused on the overarching Climate Change Plan (see [SCCS blog](#)) and its international climate policy.

However, the UK Government (through matters that are 'reserved' to the UK Parliament) has an important parallel role. **In the upcoming UK General Election, parties seeking to form the next UK Government must show a commitment to 'step up' and support more ambitious action to address the climate crisis.** The next UK Government will be in power for the majority of the crucial second half of the 'decade of delivery' to 2030, so their approach to climate in exercising these reserved powers will be critical.

For parties and candidates in Scotland, these means greater action in a range of reserved matters, that are the responsibility of the UK Parliament/Government, including:

- Full UN member status and negotiating role in international climate talks (COPs);
- Lead responsibility for international development and other overseas aid;
- Other international issues, such as trade agreements and EU-UK relations;
- Macro-economic policy and reserved fiscal policies;
- Oil and gas licensing; and
- Reserved energy issues, especially grid and markets.



In relation to nature policies, SCCS supports and echoes Scottish Environment LINK's calls for both the Scottish Government and the next UK Government to take bold action to tackle the nature crisis. You can read more about the importance of addressing the nature crisis for both the Scottish and UK Governments, along with LINK's policy proposals for the next UK Government, [here](#).

SCCS' policy proposals

SCCS' [Climate Manifesto](#) is 'a collection of proposals that could help us get back on track to' meeting targets and, we use it to 'urge decision makers at every level to support the policies ... can address the climate emergency with the urgency it requires'. A search of the manifesto for ideas where the UK Government has whole, or partial, responsibility reveals [35 such policies](#).

The forthcoming UK election will, therefore, be a crucial opportunity for those standing as representatives, and seeking to form the next UK Government, to set out their proposals for climate action in these reserved areas (as well as for 'domestic' action in England). **SCCS calls on all political parties to ensure that their manifesto for the UK General Election includes a clear commitment to achieve net zero** on the timescales already agreed, as a minimum. Such a commitment should be evidenced by further commitments, in particular, to:

- Adopt a **progressive position at the annual COP negotiations**, supporting agreements that:
 - maintain ambitious targets;
 - fairly phase out fossil fuels (including support for the [Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty](#));
 - support the global south, particularly women as they are disproportionately affected by climate change; and
 - ensure a just transition that leaves no one behind.
- Demonstrate leadership within the international community by committing to **pay our fair share to international climate finance, including loss and damage**. This commitment must be transparently in addition to, not part of Overseas Development Assistance (ODA); it should also be in the form of grants and not loans (the latter simply increases indebtedness).

Further detail in relation to these international policies can be found in the SCCS briefings produced for [COP28](#), [COP27](#) and [COP26](#).

- Ensure that **reserved fiscal policies are configured so as to incentivise emissions reductions and fund a just transition**. Key examples of reserved fiscal measures that may be used to benefit climate outcomes include corporation tax, where reliefs should be tailored to encourage investment in low carbon infrastructure/businesses and discourage high emissions; and transport, where taxes on private cars/car use and subsidies to public/active travel should be designed to encourage a modal shift from high to low carbon forms of travel. This is particularly important in relation to intercity rail travel and short-haul aviation, where the price incentives are currently perverse. *A briefing on the use of fiscal measures to tackle the climate crisis*, based on an SCCS-commissioned report on fiscal policies (linked to in the briefing), can be found [here](#).
- Exercise its powers over oil and gas licensing to **prevent any new exploration or development, and to instigate a managed and just wind-down of North Sea oil and gas production**. A full SCCS briefing on "a managed wind down of North Sea oil & gas production in line with a Just Transition" is available [here](#). Also, in relation to energy, the UK Government has a number of reserved powers in relation to the market and to grid infrastructure which should be better used to encourage a just transition to renewable energy, and improved energy efficiency.

In addition to the above, UK-wide, reserved matters that affect Scotland, SCCS supports the election demands and campaigning of our UK/English partners in relation to other matters. These include:

- The Climate Coalition: see <https://www.theclimatecoalition.org/2024-a-year-for-action>
- Green Alliance: see <https://green-alliance.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Securing-our-future.pdf>
- Wildlife and Countryside Link: see <https://www.wcl.org.uk/nature2030.asp>



- BOND: see <https://www.bond.org.uk/news/2024/01/what-will-2024-bring-for-international-development/>

Stop Climate Chaos Scotland
January 2024