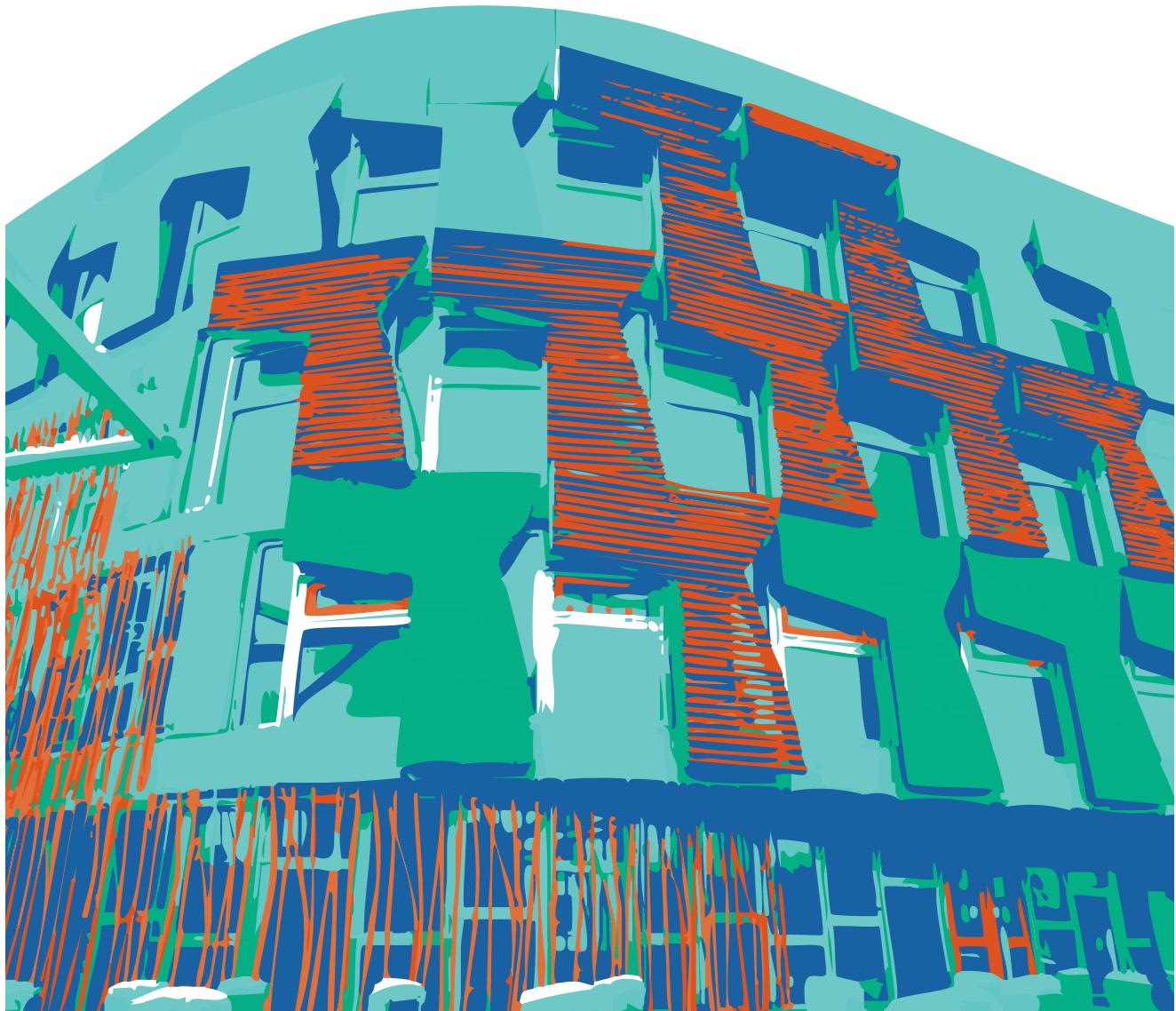




Scotland's climate coalition

Popular policies for a fairer, healthier, greener Scotland:

A blueprint for climate action in the next Scottish Parliament





Scotland's climate coalition

About Stop Climate Chaos Scotland

Stop Climate Chaos Scotland is Scotland's climate coalition, a group of over 70 civil society organisations campaigning together on climate change.

Our membership is diverse and includes national and community organisations working on:

- Climate justice
- Environment and nature
- Gender and social justice
- Faith and belief
- International development
- Worker and human rights
- Health and inequality

Together, we represent over one million people across Scotland and stand in solidarity with communities most affected by climate impacts around the world.

We collaborate with our members to build strong public support for faster climate action. We use this support to encourage decision-makers to put in place fair, effective policies to reduce emissions.

Our shared goal is for Scotland and the UK to take full responsibility for the past and present climate damage we have caused, leading to action that quickly lowers our emissions and moves away from our reliance on fossil fuels in a way that is fair and beneficial to everyone.

Our governments must also provide meaningful support to help the most affected communities adapt and recover from climate impacts, in Scotland and globally.

<https://www.stopclimatechaos.scot/>

January 2026

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Introduction

Scotland has a moral responsibility – as a rich and influential nation with a proud industrial heritage – to redouble its efforts to deliver a world-leading, people-first, clean, healthy society and economy with a thriving natural environment.

This can and must be done through popular, ambitious policies that give people – particularly those most in need – more money in their pocket, fewer daily struggles and improved opportunities for the future, while helping us to feel more secure and healthy.

This paper shows how.



Popular policies, meaningful action

Scotland's climate coalition and our 70+ diverse organisations stand for principled, practical action on the breadth of the climate and nature crises Scotland and the world faces. Our members and supporters – and [a clear majority of the Scottish public](#) – want to see real climate ambition, delivered through popular, durable policies.

We present these policy proposals at a time when the climate and other crises are biting hard, and meaningful action has never been more urgent. Scotland needs to get on the front foot after years of unsteady progress and recent setbacks.

This paper shows how the next parliament can be one of tangible, transformative climate action. As we set out in our proposals, climate policies must feel to people like a great deal for them: like relief from high energy bills, more economic security and protection from extreme weather events, and a sense that change is being done with, not to them. Crucially, they must also feel that action is being delivered and paid for fairly.

The proposals in this document would speed up the modernisation of Scotland's economy, making the most of our country's extraordinary resources and ingenuity. And they take head on the rumble of public backlash by showing how policies can be truly fair, exciting, and an answer to the stresses and indignities that mark too much of daily life. The good news is the cost of climate action [keeps on falling](#), and [action now is significantly cheaper than doing nothing](#) and having to pay for the consequential damage.

We must learn the lessons of setting emission reduction targets and then repeatedly failing to meet them: ambition is vital, but delivery is what really matters. Tangible, transformative and specific policies, like those in this paper, are urgently needed.

Time to get real

The climate crisis is here, and it's hurting people in Scotland and around the world. [Scotland's 10 warmest years on record have all occurred since 1997](#). Hotter temperatures bring climate chaos, which means drought, floods, and storms – like 2024's Storm Éowyn which battered Scotland and caused [millions of pounds of damage](#).

Extreme weather like this is the “new normal”, bringing more damage, danger and hardship to people and places across Scotland. This means that action to cut emissions is not enough – we also need to adapt rapidly and fairly to protect lives and livelihoods from the climate impacts we are already experiencing and will continue to see.

The crisis reflects inequality in its causes and impacts. Globally the richest 1% [emit as much carbon](#) as the five billion poorest people, and in Scotland the [carbon footprint of the richest is 4 times more than the poorest](#). The impacts fall heaviest on those with the least capacity to adapt, or who are already in the most precarious or vulnerable economic or social state. [Right across society there is strong agreement](#) that those who are most responsible for pollution should be expected to do the most about it.

Transitioning to a 100% clean energy based economy is a matter of profound urgency. Preventing every fraction of a degree of warming matters and every country needs to do its bit. The great news is Scotland is perhaps uniquely blessed in its natural resources, and can show the rest of the UK – and the world – what it means to be a global clean energy superpower.

People in Scotland love nature, and our lochs, glens, green spaces and the species that live there are internationally revered – but it needs protecting and enhancing so that it can thrive, and help us be more resilient to climate impacts. Scottish wildlife has [decreased](#) by 15% since 1994, with one in nine Scottish species at risk of extinction, in part driven by climate change.

Bringing people with you

A sense that the transition is fair, and that communities are properly protected from extreme weather, is mission critical for maintaining and building public support and avoiding backlash. For all these reasons, our policy proposals have fairness hardwired into them.

Climate and nature action is popular and people in Scotland expect their government to lead.

[People want to cycle more, to feel safe walking and wheeling, to have public transport they can afford](#), and to be able to access healthier and more nutritious food. 62% of the Scottish public [want](#) the government to maintain or speed up the pace on emissions cuts, and a similar number think that to do so would be good news for the economy.

But that headline support doesn't automatically translate to support for all the policies to get there, particularly not if they are seen as an imposition, an additional cost, or adding to daily stress.

For too long climate policy-making has thought of public support as an afterthought. But when policies touch on everyday life and societal change – as the tangible elements of the transition now do, from jobs to how we travel, energy bills to the health of our homes – bringing people with you is essential. A people-first approach, explaining the reasons and benefits of what 'net zero' really means to individuals must feel vital, current, tangible and an answer to everyday struggles – not technical, elitist, or 'all targets and no action'.

The 'just transition' has to start meaning something. Everyone agrees that communities and workers need proactive support as we transition to a cleaner economy – a transition that's inevitable as oil and gas supplies and use decline. But the phrase 'just transition' sounds empty to many people. Too many opportunities are being missed, like the abrupt and unjust way in which the [Grangemouth refinery was closed](#) this year – and this has to end now. It's clear to everyone that a stronger approach to just transition policy is needed to truly protect workers and communities while speeding up the transition.

It's clear that emissions must fall much more quickly. But people should feel that this transition is happening with them, not to them. Scotland's communities are already stepping up on climate, with events, campaigns and action taking place across the country. And they need decision makers to ensure that everyone directly benefits – such as through widespread individual and community ownership of the new generation of renewable energy infrastructure.

The policies in this paper will deliver a wide range of benefits: addressing the cost of living, enabling healthier lifestyles, improving the precarious state of many of our homes, giving people some merciful relief from high energy bills, and helping protect our homes and communities from extreme weather.

Change doesn't need to wait – it can start now. But the Scottish election in May 2026 creates a huge opportunity for all political parties to set out detailed and costed policies to deliver the just transition we all need. In this paper we offer a range of fair proposals for action. The next Scottish Government should then act with speed and consistency to reduce Scotland's emissions while unlocking real benefits to people's lives.

Summary of proposals

►Cross cutting policies to show climate leadership and drive delivery

Climate policy and legislation

- Uphold and take action to meet the legal target to reach net-zero by 2045 at the latest by delivering, and where necessary strengthening, the new Climate Change Plan. This includes ensuring policies are adequately resourced, implemented fairly, and are credible.
- Establish a dedicated environmental court and enshrine the right to a healthy environment in law.

Finance and making polluters pay

- Review and reform the devolved and local tax systems to fairly raise significantly more revenues to invest in faster climate action and to incentivise emission reduction.
- Introduce a fair Private Jet Tax (with an exemption for Highlands and Islands lifeline travel only) and then reduce wider aviation demand.
- Introduce a well-designed Carbon Emissions Land Tax, providing incentives for large landowners to manage land, particularly peatlands, in ways which maximise the carbon locked into the land and minimise the emissions from that land.

Just Transition

- Produce detailed and fully funded and costed Just Transition plans for each sector, developed collaboratively with trade unions and communities.
- Increase funding for and improve the effectiveness of the Just Transition Fund, guaranteeing annual budget allocations which will fulfill the current government's promise of £500m in 10 years, with spending tied to the delivery of regional Just Transition Plans.
- Establish the Just Transition Commission on a long-term, statutory footing with a representative membership of key stakeholders who can also consider gender, racial and disability justice as part of a Just Transition, and act on the Commission's call for interim just transition targets up to 2045, with annual tracking.

Climate education and community action

- Embed climate education in the curriculum and maintain funding for existing climate and environmental education programmes to support educators and young people.
- Fund and deliver a comprehensive, sustained public information campaign to deepen understanding of climate change and the action needed across all parts of society.
- Commit long-term funding for community climate action.

International climate justice

- Maintain in real-terms funding for Scotland's Climate Justice Fund, including a dedicated Loss and Damage element, and ensure the whole fund is spent in a locally-led, transparent and transformative way.
- Increase funding for Scotland's Humanitarian Emergency Fund, boosting its capacity to provide effective, life-saving support to those facing humanitarian crises due to both rapid and slow-onset climate impacts through local humanitarian leadership.
- Continue engagement in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, using Scotland's sub-national role to show international leadership, champion key issues at the talks and support the calls of Global South countries for greater equity and justice.
- Join the "[Fill the Fund](#)" campaign, actively championing more grant-based pledges to be made to the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage and fund the establishment of a centre of excellence on Loss and Damage in Scotland.
- Champion action on the global debt crisis and advocate for the UK Government to adopt world leading debt legislation and support a new UN debt workout mechanism.
- Support the call from some of the world's most climate vulnerable countries for a global Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty.

► Accelerate the clean, just energy transition

- Adopt an unequivocal policy position against new oil and gas exploration or extraction in Scotland
- Ensure that community ownership of energy is a substantial part of the energy transition, setting a target to have 1GW of community-owned energy in Scotland by 2031 and 25% of energy installations in community ownership by 2040.
- Enable the establishment of locally-owned public energy and heat companies, co-owned by community organisations, to help ensure a social mandate for renewables and deliver substantial benefits for local economies and communities.
- Continue the ban on new nuclear energy production.
- Restrict any use of negative emissions technologies to the most hard to decarbonise heavy industry and ensure any inclusion of these is backed by a credible, science-based delivery plan.

► Drive the shift to a fair, healthy and sustainable food system

- Use farming support as a mechanism to enable farmers to shift to climate and nature-friendly farming methods, with 75% of these supporting better environmental outcomes by the end of the parliamentary term.
- Use policy, new and existing regulation and associated funding to ensure that healthy, sustainable food choices are accessible and affordable to all.

► Protect and restore Scotland's land and seas

- Deliver meaningful, long-term, upscaled funding and action to regenerate Scotland's rainforest.
- Create at least 9,000 hectares of new native woodland annually until 2045
- Support local government to improve tree equity in our towns and cities, starting in high-priority areas.
- Restore at least 45,000 hectares of peatland annually and stop the sale of peat for horticulture.
- Undertake and publish high resolution and comprehensive maps of Scotland's blue carbon stores to support the designation of protected areas, and implement management measures to protect the most vulnerable inshore sediments.
- Allocate more investment to research actions to protect blue carbon.
- Reform the way fishing quota is allocated to support lower-impact fishing businesses that bring economic and social benefits to local communities, and incentivise best environmental practice.

► Make cleaner, greener travel choices easier and safer for everyone

- Commit at least 10% of the transport budget to active travel, delivering long-term investment to transform our streets and communities.
- Make bus travel free, fast and accessible and bring them into public or community ownership, alongside efforts to increase active travel and to reduce car use.
- Expand and fund community-owned sustainable transport options in every community in Scotland.

► Decarbonise our homes to make them warmer and cheaper to heat

- Put in place the mechanisms to enable 40% of Scottish homes to be fitted with clean heating solutions by 2035.
- Enable all homes to meet a minimum standard of energy efficiency by 2033 by rolling out support for homeowners to install home insulation within the next parliamentary session.

►Lead the transformation to a circular, wellbeing centred economy

- Introduce statutory, science-based carbon and material footprint targets, aiming to reduce Scotland's carbon footprint to net zero by 2045, with progress reported annually.
- Invest in reuse infrastructure.
- Create due diligence measures for creating fair and sustainable supply chains of critical minerals used in Scotland.
- Commit to revising the National Strategy for Economic Transformation, the Green Industrial Strategy and all other economic policies to put them in service of a wellbeing economy and just transition, and align them with circular economy principles.

►Build stronger resilience to climate impacts

- Establish a Climate Adaptation Fund for Scotland that, at least, meets the investment required to implement all of the commitments in the Scottish National Adaptation Plan 3 by 2029.



►Cross cutting policies to show leadership and drive delivery

Climate policy and legislation

Under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, as amended, Scotland is legally bound to achieve net-zero emissions by 2045. A new [Climate Change Plan \(CCP\)](#), detailing policies and proposals to meet this target, was published as a draft in autumn 2025 and should be approved by Parliament before the election.

The next Scottish Government should **uphold and take action to meet the legal target to reach net-zero by 2045 at the latest by delivering, and where necessary strengthening, the new CCP. This includes ensuring policies are adequately resourced, implemented fairly, and are credible.**

Effective implementation of the new CCP by the next Scottish Government is vital. It must not only reduce emissions and meet carbon budget targets but also demonstrably:

- Address poverty and inequality through fair implementation of policies
- Align with Just Transition Plans
- Improve health and wellbeing
- Protect and restore nature and biodiversity
- Applies the 'polluter pays' principle

As outlined in [our briefing](#), the CCP and its policies need to be Measurable, Ambitious, Transparent, Credible, and Holistic ("MATCH criteria").

To maintain credibility, policies across all relevant sectors must be robustly delivered to achieve emissions reduction pathways, without relying on [unreliable, expensive technological solutions like CCUS](#) or other negative emissions technologies (NETs) that may have negative side-effects. Any use of carbon removals should be limited, transparently justified, and supported by a credible, science-based delivery plan, not as a substitute for rapid emissions cuts.

Our formal response to the draft CCP was submitted in January 2026 and sets out the improvements necessary to ensure it is credible. If the CCP inherited by the next Scottish Government is clearly insufficient to meet carbon budgets and the net-zero target, immediate action should be taken to address its deficiencies without delaying essential emissions reduction efforts.

For more information:

- [Scotland's new Climate Change Plan: an updated briefing from Stop Climate Chaos Scotland, 2025](#)
- [SCCS response to Scottish Government consultation on draft Climate Change Plan, 2026](#)

The next Scottish Government should **establish a dedicated environmental court and enshrine the right to a healthy environment in law.**

In July 2022, the United Nations General Assembly declared access to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment as a universal human right, recognising that environmental damage has negative implications for the effective enjoyment of all human rights, for present and future generations.

To make a real difference, our substantive environmental rights must have 'teeth': they must be clear, robust, and enforceable to the highest standards.

The substantive elements of human right to a healthy environment have been articulated by the [UN Special Rapporteur on human rights](#) and the environment and include 'the right to clean air, safe climate, access to safe water and adequate sanitation, healthy and sustainably produced food, non-toxic environments in which to live, work study and play, and a healthy biodiversity and ecosystem.' This is currently not protected by human rights laws in Scotland.

The recognition and realisation of a human right to a healthy environment, defined according to best practice, would support and underpin other social and environmental objectives, enabling better decision-making for the environment, with litigation only being used as a last resort.

Scotland needs a dedicated Scottish Environment Court (SEC) to offer an appropriate judicial route to a remedy for environmental matters. Such a one stop shop would address the gaps existing in environmental governance in Scotland, both pre-existing and now evident following the UK's exit from the European Union (EU), separation from the EU institutions, and the loss both of oversight by the EU Commission and access to the determination of the European Court of Justice. It would also help to address Scotland's [failure to comply with its duties under the Aarhus Convention](#).

There are various ways in which the SEC could fit into the existing Scottish Courts and Tribunals Structure:

1. A new independent court
2. Extension of jurisdiction of existing court (e.g. Scottish Land Court)
3. Introduction of an Environment First Tier Tribunal

For more information:

- [The clear and urgent case for a Scottish Environment Court](#), Environmental Rights Centre for Scotland, 2023
- [Right to a healthy environment](#), Environmental Rights Centre for Scotland

Finance and making polluters pay

The Scottish Government estimates that [climate change is already costing our economy billions of pounds](#). This could rise to [7% of GDP – over £100 billion – by 2030](#) if we do not act to reduce emissions and adapt. In contrast, [billions of pounds could be added to the economy](#) by a successful green transition.

As recommended in the 2022 [SCCS Financing Climate Justice report](#), progressive use of general taxation should be the primary means to raise significant additional money fairly to invest in climate action and tackle injustice. This approach should reflect the 'polluter pays' principle, with evidence showing that, on average, those with higher incomes and wealth have higher emissions. In 2023, [Oxfam estimated](#) that the richest 1% of the world's population produced as much carbon pollution in 2019 as the five billion people who made up the poorest two-thirds of humanity combined.

Separate analysis in Scotland by Future Economy Scotland shows the [average carbon footprint of the richest 5% of households in Scotland is 4.1 times greater than the poorest 5% of households](#). This analysis emphasises the disproportionate climate impact richer people have through their lifestyle choices, including through frequent flying. Targeting higher incomes and wealth would not only be a means of making polluters pay but, given these individuals also have the greatest capacity to pay, it would also promote social justice.

As argued by the [Tax Justice Scotland campaign](#), the tax systems at Global, UK and Scotland levels must play a much bigger role to support the response to the climate crisis and improve public services. This includes fairly raising significantly more revenues and using taxation to incentivise behavioural change. Fiscal policy should complement regulatory interventions to incentivise and compel greener behaviours.

Joining global initiatives like the [Global Solidarity Levy Task Force](#) would show leadership and help unlock further global funding which makes polluters pay for climate damages.

The next Scottish Government should **review and reform the devolved and local tax systems to fairly raise significantly more revenue to invest in faster climate action and adaptation, and to incentivise emission reduction.**

Concrete options – nationally and locally – must be set out to help raise significantly more revenue to invest in fairly delivered climate action. These reforms should reflect the clear evidence that, on average, the richer you are, the more you pollute.

An area long overdue for reform is Council Tax. There has been a consensus for many years across parties, academia and civil society that the current Council Tax system is unfit for purpose. A poorly designed tax from the outset, its flaws have only deepened as time has gone on. The

cross-party Commission on Local Tax Reform recommended in 2015 that “the current system of Council Tax must end”. Public support for reform is strong and growing. Polling consistently shows that voters want a fairer system where wealthier households contribute more.

Despite a constantly worsening [financial situation](#) for Scotland’s local councils, the current Council Tax system stubbornly persists. Failure to progress reform is having severe consequences for the public services and amenities we all rely on – the regressive and inflexible nature of Council Tax makes it difficult for councils to use it as an effective tool for funding public services, as well as local climate action.

Council Tax should be replaced with a Reformed Property Tax, as part of a progressive basket of local taxes to fairly boost revenues. This replacement tax should be truly local, proportional to property value, based on periodically reviewed valuations, and flexible to individual household circumstances.

Meanwhile, existing Scottish Government commitments to ‘[explore](#)’ how devolved taxes can help drive behavioural change are positive but must progress quickly – including reforms to existing mechanisms, e.g., non-domestic rates – and wider tax innovation that drives emissions reduction.

For more information:

- [Outdated and Unfair: The Case for Council Tax Reform](#), Tax Justice Scotland, 2025
- [Scottish council tax: ripe for reform](#), Institute of Fiscal Studies, 2025

The next Scottish Government should **introduce a fair Private Jet Tax (with an exemption for Highlands and Islands lifeline travel only) and then act to reduce wider aviation demand**. This involves operationalising the Air Departure Tax (ADT), with a fair Private Jet Tax embedded from the start, as a climate just first step towards a robust aviation demand management strategy, including a Frequent Flyer Levy.

Aviation is a significant source of emissions, with [26 million air passengers at Scottish airports in 2024](#) – up from [9.9 million in 1990](#).

The [Air Departure Tax \(Scotland\) Act 2017](#) provides wide powers for the Scottish Government to apply a tax on passengers on flights leaving Scotland’s airports. However, it has yet to be operationalised. The next Scottish Government should urgently work with the UK Government to ensure an exemption for passengers travelling from the Highlands and Islands continues when this devolved tax replaces the UK-wide Air Passenger Duty in Scotland.

In operationalising ADT, a fair first step would be to embed a Private Jet Tax. This could be done almost immediately. Estimates suggest that private jets are [5 to 14 times more polluting per passenger than commercial flights](#) and that the [private jets of 23 of the world’s richest billionaires produce, on average, more carbon emissions in just over a day than the average person in Scotland does in a whole year](#).

With [more than 12,000 recorded private flights involving Scotland’s airports in 2024](#), a tax on high-polluting, luxury private jets would strongly align with climate justice and the polluter pays principle. If ADT had been in place and applied at the highest possible rate, that would have generated up to an extra £29m in tax revenue, according to [new Oxfam Scotland research](#).

Private jets are just one example of luxury travel that could be taxed, and other options include a cruise ship levy and calling on the UK Government to set higher excise duty on SUVs.

For more information:

- [Cleared for take off: A private jet tax for Scotland](#), Oxfam Scotland, 2024

The next Scottish Government should **introduce a well-designed Carbon Emissions Land Tax, providing incentives for large landowners to manage land, particularly peatlands, in ways which maximise the carbon locked into the land and minimise the emissions from that land**.

Scotland’s land could be sequestering millions of tonnes of carbon a year more than it does at present. Despite incentives such as woodland and peatland restoration grants, our land is failing to deliver its immense potential to become a major carbon sink. By attaching a payment (a tax) to land management choices that negatively impact nature and climate, a Carbon Emissions Land Tax would incentivise large landowners, with holdings over 1,000 hectares, to take more seriously their responsibilities to support national and international climate targets and accelerate progress towards maximising the carbon locked into soils and vegetation on large landholdings.

Additionally, the tax could lead to the creation of a range of technical, professional and manual jobs, particularly in Scotland's most sparsely populated areas. It would also contribute to nature protection by shifting land use away from damaging practices such as muirburn and overgrazing, which in turn would allow nature and biodiversity to flourish alongside restored peatlands and expanded woodlands.

With highly concentrated levels of land ownership in Scotland, the measure would also have the benefit of taxing a major source of wealth inequality. It should be well designed to avoid any unintended impacts on common grazings or tenant farmers.

The tax could assist the delivery of a Just Transition by generating many millions of pounds for hard-pressed rural councils, which in turn could be used to help fund climate-related projects, such as extensions of concessionary public transport; home insulation for social housing; community renewable start-ups; community woodland projects; and organic local food production and distribution.

A Carbon Emissions Land Tax would be administered and collected by local councils, under devolved powers. It would only require enabling legislation by the Scottish Parliament to give councils the powers to introduce the tax at a local level.

The impact of the tax would take time to translate into carbon savings, but academic studies and Scottish Government research suggests that the areas of land that would be targeted by this tax have the potential to sequester, at a conservative estimate, upwards of 6 million tonnes of CO₂e annually by 2040 (around 15% of Scotland's current annual emissions).

For more information:

- [It's time for a Carbon Emissions Land Tax](#), John Muir Trust

Just transition

The transition away from fossil fuels is already underway, particularly in the North Sea, where the geological reality of the basin means reserves are getting smaller and harder to extract. This is evident in the fact that [jobs supported by the UK oil and gas industry have halved in the last decade](#), despite hundreds of new licenses being issued and new fields approved. Currently, this transition is proceeding in a disorderly manner, lacking a coherent plan. If the shift to a low-carbon economy continues to be left to market forces, we risk repeating the devastating social dislocation and high unemployment seen during de-industrialisation and coal mine closures, as starkly demonstrated by the Grangemouth refinery closure. Therefore, proactive government action is needed to steer this transition in the public interest and regain control from market forces.

A low-carbon energy system and circular economy will create considerable new demand for labor, including skilled workers. The [Climate Change Committee estimates](#) between 135,000 and 725,000 net new jobs could be created by 2030 in low-carbon sectors across the UK, such as building retrofits, renewable energy generation, and electric vehicle manufacturing. Offshore wind, a sector with many jobs in manufacturing rather than just operations and maintenance (unlike oil and gas), will see significant expansion. [Research published by the STUC](#) highlights that delivering ScotWind projects at the committed scale could generate a peak of 25,000 direct jobs, but this requires substantial public investment.

Investment in training by both government and employers is vital to ensure workers have the skills for these new or changed roles, and greater levels of public ownership would facilitate more apprenticeships.

The transition to a low-carbon economy must avoid exacerbating existing labor market gender inequality. This requires investing in social infrastructure based on thorough gender analysis throughout the planning process. Such analysis will enable policymakers to maximize poverty reduction opportunities presented by the transition and ensure inequalities are not entrenched by economic transition measures.

The next Scottish Government should **produce detailed and fully funded and costed Just Transition plans for each industrial sector and region, developed collaboratively with trade unions and communities.** The plans should detail:

- How the sector's emissions reduction targets will be delivered, aligning with the Climate Change Plan
- For workers in high-carbon industries, how the government will ensure clear, accessible pathways into good quality jobs located in areas facing job losses, along with targeted retraining and support, including fast-track assistance for those under threat of redundancy
- The necessary investment and how any funding gaps will be filled
- How skills training and inclusive labor market programs should be delivered by colleges, universities, and training providers, leveraging funding criteria used by the Scottish Funding Council
- The use of tools like an improved offshore energy skills training passport, and identification of other tools to support workers' transition, specifying when and where these will be targeted
- For energy transition plans, the fair and sustainable supply and use of materials, such as steel, lithium, and nickel, and support for Scottish communities facing transition mining conflicts
- How industries can adapt to our changing climate, as per [Transition Plan Taskforce guidance](#)

Any support, funding, investment, or regulatory consents granted to companies must include conditions that stipulate their role in the just transition. Companies seeking public support for green industries or emissions reduction must meet fair work criteria, ensure pathways for existing workers into green jobs within the business, provide support and investment in skills training, and offer paid time off for training or to find alternative employment.

The current Just Transition Fund has not delivered meaningful opportunities for workers, [creating just 110 new jobs despite spending £43 million](#). The next Scottish Government should **increase funding for and improve the effectiveness of the Just Transition Fund, guaranteeing annual budget allocations which will fulfill the current government's promise of £500m in 10 years, with spending tied to the delivery of regional Just Transition Plans.**

The next Scottish Government should **establish the Just Transition Commission on a long-term, statutory footing with a representative membership of key stakeholders who can also consider gender, racial and disability justice as part of a Just Transition, and act on the Commission's call for interim just transition targets up to 2045, with annual tracking.**

For more information:

- [Support for Affected Workers: our key asks of the Scottish Government](#), Just Transition Partnership, 2025
- [Briefing: Debate on Net Zero and Energy](#), Uplift, 2025
- [Stop Climate Chaos Scotland response to consultation on "Just Transition: draft plan for transport in Scotland"](#), 2025
- [Climate Hazards and Resilience in the Workplace](#), Adaptation Scotland, 2024
- [Economic opportunities in Scotland's net zero and climate adaptation economy](#), Climate Xchange, 2024
- [Introducing a Feminist Just Transition for Scotland](#), Scottish Women's Budget Group, 2023

Climate education and community action

The next Scottish Government should **embed climate education in the curriculum and maintain funding for existing climate and environmental education programmes to support educators and young people.** This should include investing in education as a means of accelerating the transition to a sustainable society; and placing meaningful public participation, particularly of affected, marginalised and vulnerable people, at the heart of climate policy making in Scotland including through long-term investment in community-led action.

Education is the bedrock on which transformative action can be built. Currently, 'enabling young people to become responsible citizens' is one of the four key capacities of the [Curriculum for Excellence](#). Global Citizenship Education can help deliver this: it shows young people they have a voice and gives them the skills, knowledge and values to use it. It is enshrined in UN Sustainable Development Goal 4 and, in Scotland, within pupils' entitlement to Learning for Sustainability (Lfs). However, teachers must have the support they need to deliver this. Sustained investment is required to deliver on Target 2030 and the [Lfs Action Plan](#) to realise the commitment for every school to have a 'whole-school' approach.

As well as formal education, climate change literacy needs to be built into lifelong learning and community learning opportunities. Individuals, communities, businesses and the public sector can achieve carbon solutions literacy through training opportunities such as the Royal Scottish Geographic Society [Climate Solutions](#) course, accredited [Climate Emergency Training](#) delivered by Keep Scotland Beautiful (the strategic partner in Scotland for the Carbon Literacy Project), with training adaptable to suit the different needs of sectors and audiences, or through introductory training.

The next Scottish Government should **fund and deliver a comprehensive, sustained public information campaign to deepen understanding of climate change and the action needed across all parts of society.**

Meaningful public engagement with honest discussion about the benefits, choices and trade offs must become the hallmark of climate action in Scotland. This should involve education throughout the public sector, creating ongoing platforms to facilitate this, building on the participative approach of the Climate Assembly, other processes such as [regional partnerships work on lived experience](#), and the [Global South Panel](#) in relation to the International Development Strategy. Care should be taken to ensure the campaign is accessible to all and addresses existing inequalities. For example, disabled people's organisations could be funded to help shape the campaign and communicate it to their communities, which are often erroneously considered 'hard to reach.'

The next Scottish Government should **commit long-term funding for community climate action.** The current Scottish Government's funding of a network of climate hubs recognises the value of place-based, community-level responses. As such, adequate funding for both community groups and the new climate hubs is important. This funding needs to be on a sufficiently long-term basis to allow communities and hubs to offer good, secure jobs and to plan and implement programmes relating to both mitigation and adaptation.

For more information:

- [Britain Talks Climate: Scotland focused insights](#), Climate Outreach, 2025

International climate justice

Scotland must confront the injustice of the world's poorest countries bearing the financial burden of recovering from climate change's worst effects, diverting essential funds from education, health, and other vital services. For instance, the devastating floods in Pakistan in 2022 impacted approximately 33 million people, with estimated losses of \$43 billion. The public supports international leadership from governments; a recent survey revealed that [three in five people believe the UK should enhance its global leadership on these issues.](#)

While Scotland is not an official party to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), sub-national governments have a [key role to play in driving ambition and commitments](#). The next Scottish Government should **continue engagement in the UNFCCC, using its sub-national role to show international leadership and champion key issues at the talks, supporting the calls of Global South countries for greater equity and justice.**

For more information:

- [From talk to transformation – How governments can really 'shift the power' towards global justice](#), Scotland's International Development Alliance, 2024

In 2012, Scotland pioneered the establishment of a Climate Justice Fund with cross-party support, becoming the first country globally to do so. This initiative was further strengthened by making Scotland the first Global North country to specifically allocate funding for climate-induced Loss and Damage – impacts of climate change that can no longer be avoided through emission reductions or adaptation to rising global temperatures.

The next Scottish Government should, as a minimum, **maintain in real-terms funding for Scotland's Climate Justice Fund, including a dedicated Loss and Damage element, and ensure that the whole fund is spent in a locally-led, transparent and transformative way.** Funding must be provided through grants and be wholly new and additional to wider development assistance.

The world is on a trajectory to surpass the temperature goals set in the Paris Agreement, which threatens devastating consequences for many people in the most climate-vulnerable regions.

Global North countries continue to offer only a fraction of the climate finance needed to address this scale of need, risking the collapse of delicate international climate negotiations. In light of this, maintaining real-terms funding for the Climate Justice Fund is a minimum requirement; an increase would further demonstrate continued leadership in this area. The climate debt Scotland owes continues to grow until we achieve net-zero carbon emissions, therefore the most crucial and equitable action the Scottish Government can take is to swiftly and fairly reduce its emissions and meet its climate targets.

The next Scottish Government should continue Scotland's global advocacy on Loss and Damage by **joining the “[Fill the Fund](#)” campaign, actively championing more grant-based pledges to be made to the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage (FRLD) and fund the establishment of a centre of excellence on Loss and Damage in Scotland.**

The FRLD was first agreed at COP27 in 2022, yet still this fund has not spent a single penny. Furthermore, financial pledges to the fund, once fully operational, amount to only about 0.2% of the annual costs of Loss and Damage. Billions, not millions, are needed. If this fund is ever to meet the scale of needs and fulfill its promise, major nations must contribute more. As the first country to pledge money for Loss and Damage, the Scottish Government joining this campaign and adding its voice would significantly encourage others to participate.

For more information:

- [Fill the Loss and Damage Fund](#)

Amid surging levels of need and [substantial underfunding](#), the next Scottish Government should **increase funding for Scotland's Humanitarian Emergency Fund, boosting its capacity to provide effective, life-saving support to those facing humanitarian crises due to both rapid and slow-onset climate impacts through local humanitarian leadership.**

For more information:

- [Humanitarian Emergency Fund](#), Scotland's International Development Alliance

The world's most climate vulnerable countries are spending [twice as much on debt repayments as they receive in climate finance](#). The next Scottish Government should **champion action on the global debt crisis and advocate for the UK Government to adopt world leading debt legislation and support a new UN debt workout mechanism.**

For more information:

- [The UK's role in tackling the climate and debt crises](#), Christian Aid, 2025

To meet the goals of the Paris Agreement, international cooperation is necessary to explicitly halt the expansion of fossil fuels and manage a global Just Transition away from coal, oil, and gas. The world has used treaties to defuse threats posed by nuclear weapons, landmines, and chlorofluorocarbons. A [Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty \(FFNPT\)](#) could be a transformative step in addressing global emissions reductions and delivering climate justice. There is a growing international campaign for an FFNPT, with support from an increasing number of cities, states, sub-states, and countries.

The next Scottish Government could demonstrate global climate leadership by adding its voice to **support the call from some of the world's most climate-vulnerable countries for a global Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty.**

For more information:

- [MSP briefing, The Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty](#), Global Justice Now, 2025



Policies by sector

► Accelerate the clean, just energy transition

The next Scottish Government should **adopt an unequivocal policy position against new oil and gas exploration or extraction in Scotland**. While powers over offshore fossil fuel extraction remain reserved, this would show global leadership, influence others and inject urgency and focus on delivering a Just Transition and the most rapid and fair managed wind-down possible for fossil fuel production in Scotland.

There must be [no new oil and gas exploration or developments if we are to achieve Paris Agreement climate goals](#) and limit worsening climate impacts. Progress is being made in regulating North Sea oil and gas, with oil and gas developers now required to assess the climate impacts of their combustion emissions in their environmental impact assessments, thanks to the [landmark Finch ruling](#) last year. This applies to the Rosebank and Jackdaw fields following successful court rulings on the two field approvals. The UK government is also determining how they will implement their position of granting no new oil and gas licences.

Some studies have suggested [2034 as a target date](#) to end oil and gas production. This could provide certainty to help communities, local authorities and businesses plan for the future. All devolved powers must be used to prioritise the creation of good jobs in renewables and energy efficiency and put in place strong safeguards for impacted workers transferring from oil and gas jobs to renewables and other work.

Demand reduction also forms a key part of any sustainable strategy for greater energy security, which is further enhanced by greater reliance on varied renewable resources rather than volatile fossil fuel markets. Concerns about energy security, resilience and affordability, driven by global events and the current cost-of-living crisis, are best addressed by an energy strategy that is based on demand reduction, clean energy and greater efficiency. A managed and just phase out of oil and gas forms an essential part of a sustainable long-term approach to embed this strategy. The geological reality of the North Sea basin, where reserves are increasingly expensive and difficult to extract, means that the UK will become increasingly reliant on energy imports despite any new production, until we have moved away from our reliance on fossil fuels. For example, [new analysis](#) found that the UK will no longer be able to meet heating demand using only domestically extracted gas by 2027, even if new fields are approved.

The many devolved powers to shift energy generation and energy consumption to as close to fully renewable as possible within the same timeframe must be used, and the ban on all forms of onshore oil and gas production, including fracking, should be maintained. At the same time, detailed assessments should be carried out to ensure renewable developments are not delivered at the expense of biodiversity.

For more information:

- [Manifesto recommendations from Scottish Community Coalition on Energy](#), 2025

To be just, we cannot replace unfair ownership of fossil fuels with similarly skewed ownership of clean energy. The next Scottish Government should **ensure that community ownership of energy is a substantial part of the energy transition, setting a target to have 1GW of community-owned energy in Scotland by 2031 and 25% of energy installations in community ownership by 2040**.

This is possible with the right policies and incentives to drive change, and would mean the benefits of clean energy stay in communities and build community wealth.

To build public support for renewables and the energy transition, we must enable and support increased community ownership and shared ownership of new and existing electricity and heat infrastructure, and fair distribution of the wealth that is being generated and consolidated through renewables.

[64% of the Scottish public](#) would support a community-owned renewables project in their area, compared to 40% support for a private project. This is partly due to financial benefit: on average, community-owned wind farms provide 34 times more financial benefit per MW (and sometimes more) to the local community than private wind farms. However, equally important is that communities feel a sense of control and involvement in the energy transition. Community energy projects drive sustainable behaviour changes and help ensure a just transition for all.

The Scottish Government has already set itself a target of 2GW of local and community-owned energy by 2030, and is currently at 1.1GW. It should commit to meeting higher targets by enabling the increase of true community ownership and shared ownership, rather than supporting more local ownership that is privately-owned, e.g. by farms, estates and commercial energy businesses.

The [National Framework Agreement for the Supply of Electricity](#) should enable local authorities who use it to buy a percentage of their power from local communities, meaning lower costs for the local authority and a guaranteed income for the community group.

Our people and places urgently require energy-focussed Community Development Officers to support their communities to negotiate shared ownership opportunities with private developers and develop feasible and substantial shared-ownership community energy schemes. The increased interest in community energy is apparent through the work that Community Energy Scotland and the Climate Hubs are undertaking across Scotland. However, the support to deliver this action must be provided by the next Scottish Government.

For more information:

- [A fair energy deal for Scottish communities](#), Scottish Community Coalition on Energy, 2024

Case study: community energy

In North Yell, Shetland, the power of the wind has fed the growth of a rural economy, bringing jobs, opportunity, homes and new life to the area.

Alice Mathewson is development manager of the North Yell Development Council, where a small wind farm of five turbines has been in operation since 2017. This summer, revenue from the farm allowed the local development trust to buy and let a home for a young family.

'It's an important moment because, like so many areas in rural Scotland, this is a place where there's nowhere for workers to live – and there's nowhere for young people to go when they leave home' says Alice.

'The thing that has allowed us to do that is wind. In 2017 we built five wind turbines at Garth wind farm, which together generate around 4.5 megawatts of electricity that goes right back into the grid.

'Every year, we negotiate with suppliers to get the best price for the electricity we produce, and after we have covered costs the rest we invest right back into the community.'

'The amount of power we generate is the equivalent to just one of the turbines at the Viking Wind Farm on mainland Shetland, which has 103 turbines and is run by Viking and SSE Renewables. But the amount of difference we've made in terms of community benefit and investment here is incomparable.'

North Yell has built a 28-berth marina, purchased the local shop and bought two business units which we are turning into a community hub.

Alice adds: 'In addition, we operate a number of social projects, including a free community lunch club, which is attended by 60-70 people weekly, a local youth club and shopping and prescription deliveries. We have also just purchased a vehicle for community use, and operate a community grant scheme, distributing funds to other organisations and individuals.'

'We now have what we've been told is the largest community-owned industrial estate in Europe, and it's occupied by local businesses over 14 sites.'

Unlike some other windfarm developments, there was never any objection to Garth, Alice says. That's because all the profits are going back to local people. There could be so many more projects like theirs – but many are held back by lack of space to connect to the local electricity grid. 'We can't expand, either, for the same reason,' she adds.

'Projects like ours should be at the top of the list. We have shown what can be done with a fraction of the power that Viking produces – if big developers left a small amount of grid connection aside for others to do what we have done, the benefits would be massive.'

'Communities should also have a right to buy a share in the renewables project should they wish to do so. And – crucially – there should be access to the grid for people like us who want to make the most of the clean power that Scotland has to offer.'

'We know how much money can be made. And if communities really want to benefit from renewables they need a real and lasting stake.'

The next Scottish Government should **enable the establishment of locally-owned public energy and heat companies, co-owned by community organisations, to help ensure a social mandate for renewables and deliver substantial benefits for local economies and communities.**

[Common Weal](#) have outlined proposals for various options for increasing public ownership of energy under devolved powers. A publicly owned energy company could have sold the new ScotWind offshore electricity to the grid and retained the operating profits, with estimates that the failure to do so would [cost Scotland between £3.5 billion and £5.5 billion every year – about a tenth of the Scottish budget](#). Greater public ownership would also benefit the economy and help tackle fuel poverty. The feasibility report for [East Lothian Heat](#) which estimated significant socio-economic benefit for the region – more than £900 million – and long-term, stable tariffs for vulnerable households.

The next Scottish Government should **continue the ban on new nuclear energy production**. Issues related to the resources used for and emissions generated by the construction and operation, as well as the uncertainties and risks of waste disposal and decommissioning, mean that nuclear energy is not a low carbon or sustainable solution to our energy needs. Given the wealth of renewable resources available to Scotland, seeking to address energy issues with nuclear power would be both expensive and an unnecessary distraction from a transition to a genuinely clean energy system.

For more information:

- [Net zero without nuclear: The case against nuclear power](#), Jonathon Porritt, 2021

The next Scottish Government should **restrict any use of negative emissions technologies (NETS) to the most hard to decarbonise heavy industry and ensure any inclusion of these is backed by a credible, science-based delivery plan.**

Most NETs rely on carbon capture and storage (CCS) and this is unproven at the scale needed and unlikely to be up and running in any significant capacity before the 2030s. The [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#) ranked CCS as among the least effective and most expensive ways to meet 2030 climate targets, and the [Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis's research](#) shows that no CCS project in the world has managed a capture rate of more than 80 percent, with many capturing much less, and that some [£408 billion will be required by 2050](#) to install and operate CCS infrastructure in the UK.

The current Scottish Government's own [feasibility study](#) highlights the significant uncertainties and lower than expected impact compared to ambition, reflecting wider clear historic failures of delivering impactful CCS projects. Since NETs are unlikely to make any meaningful contribution to emissions reductions during the next Climate Change Plan period, the next Scottish Government must prioritise actions that fairly reduce emissions and deliver tangible benefits to people's lives over unproven, unaffordable techno-fixes.

For more information:

- [Carbon capture factsheet: The true cost of funding failure](#), Friends of the Earth Scotland, 2024



►Drive the shift to a fair, healthy and sustainable food system

The food system accounts for a significant proportion of Scotland's greenhouse gas emissions, and the food we import generates significant emissions in other countries. Alongside this, many people in Scotland lack access to affordable, sustainable and nutritious food, impacting our health and increasing household costs.

Scotland's first [National Good Food Nation Plan](#) was published in December 2024 as part of the [Good Food Nation \(Scotland\) Act 2022](#) commitments. This sets out a systems approach to food policy which, if done well, could help to deliver the changes needed to transition to a low carbon, sustainable food system that promotes human and planetary health, enhances food security, protects biodiversity and supports businesses, while ensuring this does not increase costs for households, and ensuring a fair transition for all workers in the food system. However, for the Plan to be effective this ambition must be translated across all related policy areas, not least within the forthcoming Climate Change Plan.

Farmers have a key role to play in both providing sustainable, healthy food, and managing our land and seas in ways that minimise emissions and protect nature. However, currently [less than 10% of public funding given to the industry pays for farming methods that explicitly support nature and tackle climate change](#).

The next Scottish Government should **use farming support as a mechanism to enable farmers to shift to climate and nature-friendly farming methods, with 75% of these supporting better environmental outcomes by the end of the parliamentary term.**

Public funds should be a key driver for change, as well as providing support to mitigate and adapt. These should be diverted from basic payments to those delivering minimal positive environmental outcomes to focus on helping farmers and crofters adopt new practices and invest in new systems, including using powers on capping and tapering payments in the [Agriculture and Rural Communities \(Scotland\) Act 2024](#), to maximise the cost effectiveness of public spending.

A £500m Agricultural Transformation Fund to cover the period up to 2030, with a further multi-year funding plan using a blend of public and private finance, would give long-term security to farmers and crofters and support them through the transition to climate and nature-friendly farming.

There is strong public support for changing how we support Scottish agriculture. In polling carried out by [Survation for WWF Scotland](#) 74% of respondents said that farmers should be paid to produce food, protect nature and reduce emissions, and 89% said that farming and crofting has an important role to play in tackling climate change and restoring nature.

Farmers are seeing the impacts of a changing climate, with record breaking rain in early 2024, [devastating](#) last year's crops of wheat, barley, oats and oilseed rape, and [most are concerned about the impact of climate change on their ability to make a living](#). Ensuring Scotland's land-based activities are well-adapted to climate changes is essential. As per [insights from Adaptation Scotland](#), this includes adaptation to support livelihoods, nature restoration, food production, economic prosperity, housing, and supporting people's health and wellbeing.

Continued and expanded support to farmers and rural industries to improve carbon literacy is needed if solutions to some of the challenges facing the sector are to be identified and actioned appropriately. Training – such as that provided by [SAC Consulting and Keep Scotland Beautiful](#) – can support this shift in attitude and lead to better environmental choices being made.

For more information:

- [The 10 Elements of Agroecology: Guiding the Transition to Sustainable Food and Agricultural Systems](#), Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
- [Farming for 1.5 report](#), National Farmers Union Scotland and Nourish Scotland, 2021

The next Scottish Government should **use policy, new and existing regulation and associated funding to ensure that healthy, sustainable food choices are accessible and affordable to all**. This specifically relates to Outcomes 1, 3, 4 and 5 as laid out in the Scottish Government's [Proposed National Good Food Nation Plan](#) as published on 27th June 2025.

A recent study by [ClimateXchange](#) looked at seven international examples of diets which are good for the climate and health. They found that the top recommendations were:

- Reducing meat, in particular ruminant meat
- Moderating dairy
- Increasing vegetables, fruits and plant proteins
- Sourcing sustainably
- Avoiding highly processed foods
- Reducing food waste

In Scotland, these recommendations could be delivered by developing [Sustainable Dietary Guidelines](#) similar to those currently being developed in many European countries, reflecting the twin goals of nutrition and sustainability and promoting a healthier food culture.

A significant commitment to rethink policy initiatives to support delivery of these guidelines would be needed, with comprehensive regulation of the food environment and clear targets should be set to reduce the consumption of ultra-processed foods, processed meat and intensively farmed animal products, replacing them with more local, nourishing and sustainable alternatives. Where animal-sourced food is consumed, it should come from systems with climate and nature friendly practices, including demonstrably higher animal welfare and environmental standards.

Where food must be imported, sourcing in line with [Fair Trade principles](#) should be prioritised to ensure environmental sustainability, decent livelihoods, and climate resilience for producers.

The procurement of food served on the public plate, such as in schools and care settings, should be seen as an investment in local economies and natural environments where we prioritise local and organic food. This means increasing and ring-fencing food budgets, whilst investing in the necessary processing facilities to further support local food economies and reduce emissions from transportation.

Research innovation and support for adoption of new practices is essential – including agroforestry, microbiome-driven breeding to reduce methane emissions, and intercropping of cereals and legumes. Scotland should also develop a thriving glasshouse sector, integrated with renewable energy generation and storage, to reduce reliance on importing "Mediterranean" vegetables from countries experiencing water shortages. [Exploring opportunities for producing feed and food in novel ways](#) would help to support rural economies.

Innovation is also needed to address food waste – Scotland is not on track to meet its previous 33% reduction target by 2025, with [food waste levels instead increasing](#).

Within the marine environment, these recommendations could be achieved by incentivising and supporting sustainable low-impact fishing, keeping more of what is caught in Scotland, reducing bycatch and discards, and supporting well-paid jobs in coastal communities.

For more information:

- [Analysing Scotland's diet and climate policy landscape](#), Climate Xchange, 2025
- [Scottish Food Coalition 2026 Manifesto Asks](#), 2025

Case study: farming for climate and nature

Livestock farmer Matt Griffin farms 2500 acres at Neidpath, Peebles. He farms sheep and beef and says his is a 'typical upland farm'.

But Griffin, like all farmers, is now dealing with whiplash weather – prolonged dry periods, followed by heavy rainfall and flood – on an increasingly regular basis.

He's on the steering group of the Nature Friendly Farming Network and advocates methods that protect the soil, as well as his business.

'Back in May, we were very dry – and it impacted a lot of the decisions we have been making in terms of how we farm,' he said.

'For example, we're grazing fields that we haven't grazed yet. We always try and have a percentage of the farm that we don't intend to graze, and it gives us an option in spring and summer to open the gate.'

'Keeping a field to one side relates to the way we farm with nature in mind. If we can try and leave lots of ground cover, that means the soil is shaded.'

'In the hot summer of July 2022 we found soil that had a surface temperature over 50 degrees, But the soil under a hedge had a temperature of 18 degrees. The evaporation on the hotter soil is significantly more than the ground that's shaded and covered by biomass. The biology is going to struggle to survive in the hot soil, and infiltration will be poor.'

'If we can hold onto water from dewy mornings, even that helps. If we can keep water in the landscape if we can hold water back and hold it into the soil it allows us to go a little bit longer.'

These measures help during heavy rainfall, as much as they do during dry periods, because the soil is more absorbent and can hold onto water, instead of seeing it run off the land.

'If we can echo what's happening in nature, it can go some way to help,' Griffin adds. 'It's easy to talk about the environmental benefits of farming with nature, but if you can get farmers to understand the financial benefits and the social benefits – because you're mitigating flooding – then it's a triple win.'

'As these weather events become more common, we have just got to get better all these things. And as an industry that's a big opportunity.'





► Protect and restore Scotland's land and seas

Some of Scotland's land is absorbing carbon, while other parts release it significantly. The net figure is very deceptive, as land use is actually the largest gross source of emissions – greater even than the transport sector. Therefore, reducing these emissions is vital, and will also help us adapt to climate impacts, protect nature, restore biodiversity, and create new rural jobs.

Trees are vital for carbon sequestration, but much of Scotland's tree cover has been lost, and only 30,000 hectares of Scotland's rainforest remains. The next Scottish Government must **deliver meaningful, long-term, upscaled funding and action to regenerate Scotland's rainforest**.

Scotland's rainforest is a globally rare temperate rainforest habitat, rich in bryophytes, lichens, mosses, plants and animals, which once covered huge swathes of Scotland's west coast. What remains now is threatened by overgrazing from deer, invasive species like *Rhododendron Ponticum*, and habitat fragmentation.

Significant progress has been made to save Scotland's rainforest, led by local communities and the [Alliance for Scotland's Rainforest](#), with support from the Scottish Government and its agencies. The framework is in place, and restoration work has begun on this precious habitat. However, much more is needed to build on these successes and to restore and expand Scotland's rainforest.

For more information:

- [Saving Scotland's Rainforest](#), Alliance for Scotland's Rainforest

The next Scottish Government should **create at least 9,000 hectares of new native woodland annually until 2045 and incentivise integrating trees on farms and crofts**. Scotland's native woodlands currently cover just 4% of our land. A rapid increase in planting is needed to benefit from their carbon sequestration and habitats they provide. Alongside this, more realistic grants for enhanced deer management are needed to gradually reduce our reliance on planting and fencing, leading to more natural regeneration of broadleaved native woodlands, which create more diverse and resilient habitats and cost less public money.

Agroforestry is an important land use which will help the land use sector meet its commitments on climate and nature. It enables farms to adapt to climate change, through better soil structure and water infiltration to protect against flooding and provides shade and shelter for animals and farmers. The next Scottish Government should invest at scale to support high-quality agroforestry until it becomes a widely used and understood aspect of Scottish farming. There must be appropriate safeguards against land speculation using forestry grants and claiming carbon savings at the expense of small farmers and local communities.

For more information:

- [Farm payments to support integration of trees and woods into farming systems in Scotland](#), Soil Association and Woodland Trust, 2024

Woods and trees benefit our health and wellbeing and provide much-needed shade and habitats for nature. Tree equity means ensuring all communities have fair access to the benefits of trees where they live. Some urban areas enjoy abundant greenery and tree cover, while others lack these essential natural assets, with low-income areas experiencing this most. The next Scottish Government should **support local government to improve tree equity in our towns and cities, starting in high-priority areas**.

Achieving tree equity requires more than just planting; it must be a core part of urban forest planning. Plans should also include ongoing care and protection for both new and existing trees to ensure they thrive and enhance residents' quality of life for years to come.

For more information:

- [Tree Equity](#), Woodland Trust

Peatlands store more carbon than all the world's forests combined, and in the UK alone are estimated to store [3.2 billion tonnes of carbon](#). However, over 80% of Scotland's peatlands are

degraded and release carbon instead of storing it. While peatland restoration rates are increasing, they are still far from what is needed to restore all degraded areas.

The next Scottish Government should **restore at least 45,000 hectares of peatland annually and stop the sale of peat for horticulture**. The additional restoration would cost approximately £25 million per year. According to a [Natural England review](#), successfully restoring this extra 25,000 hectares per year could lead to an additional carbon saving of a third of a million tonnes a year.

To achieve this, a strong pipeline of projects, skills development for the growing workforce, and clear policies and financial certainty for landowners are essential. The [Carbon Emissions Land Tax](#) could greatly incentivise landowners to protect and restore peatlands, while also generating funds for this work.

A clearly defined, fixed date is needed to end the sale of both imported peat and UK-sourced peat in bagged compost for amateur gardeners as soon as possible, and for professional growers within two seasons, with only limited exceptions.

For more information:

- [Why Peat Free](#), Peat Free Partnership
- [Peatland restoration: a natural solution to climate change](#), RSPB

Scotland's marine environments play a crucial role in storing and capturing carbon. These areas currently [store 9,636 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalent and sequester 28.4 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalent annually](#). This stored carbon is roughly equal to all the carbon held in Scotland's land-based ecosystems. Scotland's seabed habitats alone could capture up to 9.5 million tonnes of organic carbon each year, which is more than four times the amount sequestered by Scottish forests (2.07 million tonnes). When considering emissions from activities at sea, the overall "marine carbon" balance becomes incredibly important for addressing climate change.

Scotland's seas are not in good environmental condition and we are failing to meet its restoration goals. [Reports from 2024](#) revealed that 152 million tonnes of organic carbon are stored in just the top 10cm of seabed sediments, primarily mud, in Scotland's seas. Addressing marine carbon issues can simultaneously improve the environmental health of the seas, creating a win-win situation.

At present, neither blue carbon nor some aspects of the wider marine emissions are included in the UN's greenhouse inventories. This means that they are not measured or reported in Scotland's annual emissions report or addressed in the Climate Change Plan. However, blue carbon, whether officially "counted" or not, significantly affects the climate. Not addressing it now delays action that will eventually be recognised and makes achieving the Paris Agreement targets even harder.

Taking action on blue carbon now would allow Scotland to become a global leader in this area, offering advice and influencing international discussions. Such actions would also contribute to marine nature restoration, helping Scotland achieve its wider environmental aspirations, and support a Just Transition for marine industries.

The next Scottish Government should **develop high-resolution and comprehensive maps of Scotland's blue carbon stores to support the designation of Marine Protected Areas, and implement management measures to protect the most vulnerable inshore sediments**.

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) provide a vehicle to implement and monitor management measures for blue carbon – which also deliver for the wider marine environment. The ongoing process of introducing management measures to MPAs in both offshore and inshore areas must build on the proposals in the former Bute House Agreement and include the protection of blue carbon as an objective. In particular, the next Scottish Government should:

- Ensure that all MPAs are protected from destructive activities that damage blue carbon habitats and threaten marine life.
- Account for both carbon and biodiversity in designating new protected areas, to support ecosystem resilience and the role seas play in climate mitigation.
- Adopt a site wide approach to managing damaging fishing activity across the offshore MPAs that were consulted on in 2024, and are now waiting for management measures to be implemented.

While actions for MPAs are important, there must also be management measures introduced to protect blue carbon habitats (including saltmarshes and seagrasses) irrespective of whether they are located within these.

Existing research and models developed in conjunction with the Blue Carbon Forum should be used to create detailed maps that will inform the selection and management of MPAs and related fisheries management. Whilst [low granularity maps have been published for the UK Exclusive Economic Zone](#) there is a need for higher granularity mapping to support the designation of protected areas.

This is particularly important for safeguarding “[blue carbon hotspots](#)” that are vulnerable to disruption from activities like bottom trawling. Precautionary measures are needed to protect fragile, organic-carbon-rich muddy sediments, especially in areas like fjordal sea lochs, regardless of whether further research on disturbed organic carbon is completed.

To deliver this, the next Scottish Government should **allocate more investment to research and actions to protect blue carbon and decarbonise the fishing industry**. Additional funding could come from the Nature Recovery Fund, which needs a minimum of £100 million over the next parliamentary term to keep pace with inflation, though significantly more is needed to reverse nature loss.

There is now sufficient information to support effective practical actions to protect key Scottish blue carbon habitats and minimise the impact of the fishing industry. This funding should support action to:

- Restore habitats like seagrass beds and saltmarshes.
- Research and monitoring of blue carbon dynamics.
- Add seagrass and saltmarsh to the Greenhouse Gas Registry for tracking and monitoring emissions.
- Undertake full cycle assessments for each fleet segment.
- Protect of upper sealoch sediments by introducing targeted spatial management restrictions on damaging mobile seabed-impacting fishing gears.

The most important of these habitats are at the heads of our fjordic sea lochs which sequester large amounts of organic terrestrial carbon, washed out by rivers. The paper [Carbon burial in the mid-latitude fjords of Scotland](#) sets out the scale of the carbon sequestration and storage in our sea lochs, stating, “it is estimated that Scottish fjords bury 84,000 tonnes of [organic carbon] annually, which is equivalent to the whole North Sea sedimentary system, despite the area of the latter being approximately 190 times larger”. Additionally, [Scotland’s forgotten carbon](#) lists the most critical fourteen sea lochs from this perspective and notes that “Scottish fjords are a more effective store of [carbon] than the terrestrial environment”, and that “fjord sediments are potentially the most effective store of [carbon] globally”. Crucially, securing these most important seabed areas does not require the closure of the whole of those fourteen sea lochs to trawling. As [Sources, Sinks, and Subsidies: Terrestrial Carbon Storage in Mid-latitude Fjords](#) indicates, the relevant areas for closure can be established within each sea loch.

Despite clear policy commitments in [Scotland’s Blue Economy Vision](#), as well as the obligation under the [UK Fisheries Act 2020](#) to meet the climate change objective that ‘the adverse effect of fish and aquaculture activities on climate change is minimised’, progress towards decarbonising the fishing industry has been negligible. A vital precursor to any progress on this issue is to understand the current extent of fisheries emissions and to establish detailed baseline data. However, apart from the pelagic sector for which a [Life Cycle Assessment of 11 vessels in the Scottish pelagic fleet](#) was undertaken, there are limited detailed analyses of greenhouse gas emissions at vessel level.

For more information:

- [Action for Blue Carbon: Protecting the marine environment to support action on climate change](#), Stop Climate Chaos Scotland, 2025

The next Scottish Government should **reform the way fishing quota is allocated to support lower-impact fishing businesses that bring economic and social benefits to local communities, and incentivise best environmental practice**. It is already provided for in the Fisheries Act 2020 and would cost the public purse nothing extra and instead put more money in more people's pockets.

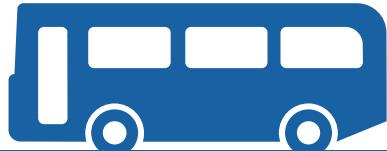
Scotland's seas and fish are public assets. Fishing quota is the main way the Scottish Government allocates the opportunity to catch fish. The [UK Fisheries Act 2020](#) states that quota allocation must consider environmental, social, and economic factors. However, Scotland currently allocates quota based solely on economic criteria.

The Scottish Government's outdated "Fixed Quota Allocations" approach has resulted in most of the quota being controlled by a few highly profitable fishing businesses. This puts coastal communities at a disadvantage, hindering their pursuit of a sustainable future with secure local fishing jobs and a well-preserved marine environment. Businesses receiving large quotas often use larger, more fuel-intensive pelagic fleets that operate in open seas. They also tend to use trawlers and dredgers, which churn and disrupt the seabed, releasing stored carbon. In contrast, low-impact fisheries like hand-divers or creelers use less fuel, stay in inshore waters, and cause minimal seabed disturbance. A healthy seabed supports thriving biodiversity, provides nursery grounds for fish, and contributes to climate mitigation and adaptation by preventing coastal erosion and sequestering significantly more carbon than forests.

For more information:

- [An opportunity for fishing quota reform](#), Open Seas, 2024





► Make cleaner, greener travel choices easier and safer for everyone

The transport sector is Scotland's largest source of carbon emissions and [car traffic makes up more than 60%](#) of the total emissions from road transport.

Our current transport system imposes many costs on society and these negative impacts are not felt equally; they are felt most acutely by the [poorest communities experiencing them the most](#):

- Environmental – climate change, air and noise pollution, and harm to wildlife
- Social – divided communities, poor health from inactivity, injuries, and fatalities from road traffic accidents
- Economic – congestion, road repair expenses, and healthcare costs.

Enabling easier and safer access to greener, healthier transport would not only reduce carbon emissions, it would also improve our health, make towns and cities more pleasant, enhance access to leisure and employment, reduce inequality and living costs, and improve local air quality.

Transport policy decisions should follow the sustainable transport hierarchy, prioritising walking, wheeling and cycling, followed by public transport, electric vehicles and car sharing, and finally private cars and flying.

The next Scottish Government should **commit at least 10% of the transport budget to active travel, delivering long-term investment to transform our streets and communities**. This includes multi-year budgets and reorganising street space to prioritise walking and cycling routes. Active travel budgets and plans must also consider how to make them resilient to future climate impacts.

For many, especially young people, families on lower incomes, and disabled people, active travel can provide a lifeline, offering transport independence, access to important local services and a meaningful way to save money, helping tackle child poverty.

Increased investment in walking/wheeling and cycling infrastructure – supported by all major parties at the 2021 Holyrood election – is delivering positive change. Where new, well-connected cycle routes are being built, they are helping improve lives and support ever more people to travel by cycle for everyday journeys, in greater safety and confidence.

For more information:

- [Investing in Scotland's Future: A Joint Active Travel Manifesto For 2026](#), various organisations, 2025

Over 75% of public transport journeys are made by bus, and are especially vital for residents in low-income areas. The next Scottish Government should **make bus travel free, fast and accessible and bring them into public or community ownership, alongside efforts to increase active travel and to reduce car use**.

A key prerequisite for success is ensuring a high-quality service for the user, with frequency and comprehensive coverage of the system maintained and improved, alongside policies to discourage car use. For residents of rural and island communities, free travel could be extended to ferries, trains or community transport.

Experts are clear that to enable healthier, greener and fairer transport choices, a combination of carrots, as outlined above, and sticks is essential. [Research](#) commissioned by the Scottish Government from AECOM makes clear that some form of road user charging (whether congestion charging or other) is the only way to achieve substantial car-use reduction. Moreover, the research confirms that this can be done equitably and by accounting for different parts of Scotland. Apart from the benefits for emissions, congestion, and the many other external costs on society, this would provide considerable additional income for sustainable transport options.

Beyond reducing emissions by decreasing car trips, this policy would help to tackle poverty and inequality by making it easier for people to access leisure and employment opportunities, and by addressing isolation and loneliness. Reducing car traffic also reduces congestion, which boosts local economies, improves air quality and makes bus travel even more attractive. A [report for Friends of the Earth Scotland](#) found that major investment in public transport could almost double

the number of direct jobs in the sector and support around 35,000 direct and indirect jobs in manufacturing and infrastructure over a 12-year period.

Currently, there is a gender divide in transport due to the division of household labour and caring responsibilities; men are more likely to have access to a car, while women are more likely to make multi-destination journeys. A reformed active travel and bus network should enable a diversity of journeys, including care-related trips which are disproportionately taken by women using buses.

Over 100 cities, more than half of them in Europe, have made all or some modes of their public transport free. [Behavioural research](#) confirms the effectiveness of free public transport in changing habits, and [examples from Korean and European cities](#) demonstrate how free bus travel has brought a range of benefits.

In Scotland, during the first year of extending the concessionary bus travel scheme to under 22s, [over 50 million journeys were made by young people](#). This clearly shows that when cost is removed as a barrier, people use public transport, and this consideration should be central to changing transport behaviour. Public funds already cover more than half of every bus ticket in Scotland; [63% of bus operator revenues in Scotland in 2022/23](#) came from public funding through concessionary travel reimbursement, grants or supported services.

At just over £745m, the total investment needed to cover all operator revenue would be an increase of only £275m on the existing spend of £470m a year. By comparison the Scottish Government budget for 2025–26 is set to invest nearly £1.1 billion in maintaining and enhancing the trunk road network.

Public or community ownership of public transport operators would significantly improve the economics of supporting free bus travel. Public ownership is needed to enable affordable, accessible fully-integrated public transport planned and coordinated to meet the communities' needs, using the franchising powers in the Transport Act 2019. Progress has been far too slow – these powers need to be simplified and supported, as is happening with the Buses Services Bill in England.

As first steps, concessionary travel could be expanded to under 25s, people in receipt of low-income social security payments and unpaid carers. Free bus trials could also be rolled out in two Scottish cities, as recommended by the Just Transition Commission in 2021. The £2 bus trial in England resulted in [35% of people taking more journeys by bus](#), and 49% of people aged 16 to 24 reported that the £2 bus fare cap had a positive or very positive impact on their living costs. In the recent trial to remove peak fares on ScotRail trains [more than half the new train passengers normally drove a car for their journey](#), and the removal of peak train fares must continue.

For more information:

- [On The Move](#), Friends of the Earth Scotland, 2023
- [Can We Reduce Car Use Fairly?](#) Just Transition Commission, 2023

The next Scottish Government should **expand and fund community-owned sustainable transport options in every community in Scotland**. Everyone, everywhere in Scotland, should have local transport that meets their needs. Sometimes, community-owned solutions are the only or best way to achieve this. Many communities want to implement these but lack the necessary investment (especially capital). The next Scottish Government could enable this in a variety of different ways: increased (potentially ring-fenced) funding for Local Authorities for community transport; boosting existing programmes like the People and Place Funds through Regional Transport Partnerships; and creating national pots of funding in areas where there are key gaps, like a community-bus start-up fund.

An obvious loophole to close is that the National Concessionary Travel Schemes (NCTS) exclude most Community Transport services. These services benefit more than 802,000 people annually, leaving many of the 2.3 million Scots eligible for free bus travel with a 'bus pass in name only'. Over 180 community-owned, local and non-profit operators plug gaps in our bus network with demand-responsive transport. This offers a lifeline for many urban, rural and island communities, as well as for many older people and disabled people. However, since these services are not part of the NCTS, both passengers and operators are financially disadvantaged. The Scottish Government should expand eligibility for NCTS reimbursement to appropriate services provided by Community Transport operators.

For more information:

- [Act local: Community transport, climate action and Scotland's Just Transition to net zero](#), Community Transport Association, 2023



► Decarbonise our homes to make them warmer and cheaper to heat

Decarbonising our homes is crucial for meeting climate targets, alleviating fuel poverty, and improving health. Heat in buildings is Scotland's second largest source of emissions, accounting for around [20% of our annual carbon emissions](#). Around [90% of homes still use oil and gas for heating, and 50% of homes are below the recommended levels of energy efficiency](#). Furthermore, fuel poverty has reached unprecedented levels with [1 in 3 households in Scotland struggling to afford to heat their homes](#) as a result of poor insulation and soaring fossil fuel prices.

Increasingly extreme weather is also bringing challenges, with many homes lacking resilience to higher temperatures and increased rainfall. Building standards must be improved to reflect the reality of current and future climate impacts, with a [user-friendly metric](#) developed to measure overheating risk in homes and buildings.

Installing clean heating systems powered by Scotland's abundant homegrown renewables in combination with better insulation in our homes and workplaces would have a transformational impact on people's lives in Scotland through:

- Delivering affordable warmth for households – a reduction of around 15% in annual energy bills (£365 at current energy prices) and carbon emissions (around one tonne) per home that meets the minimum energy efficiency standard roughly equivalent with an EPC 'C' rating¹
- Creating new jobs – the [Existing Homes Alliance](#) estimates between 16,200–21,600 jobs could be sustained in insulating homes and changing heating systems
- [Improving our health](#) – healthier and warmer home environments through clean heating and energy efficiency measures can reduce health-related public spending and deliver improved public health outcomes. It is estimated that it costs NHS Scotland between £48m and £80m per year to treat health conditions caused as a result of living in cold homes²
- Determining whether Scotland remains on track with its legally-binding 2045 net zero ambition – a reduction of around [90% in annual carbon emissions per home that switches from a gas boiler to an air-source heat pump](#)
- Benefiting the economy – [an increase in GDP by over £3 for every £1 invested in energy efficiency](#), and improving energy efficiency in properties and installing low-carbon technologies can increase property value. Based on home value modelling, [an air source heat pump alone could increase the sales value of a home by around £5,000 – £8,000](#)

In order to deliver these benefits to people and businesses, and significantly reduce our climate impacts, the next Scottish Government should:

- Commit to clean, affordable warmth by **putting in place the mechanisms to enable 40% of Scottish homes to be fitted with clean heating solutions by 2035, as recommended by the CCC**. This target includes homes fitted with heat pumps and homes connected to heat networks. [Heat pumps can cut household carbon emissions by up to 90%](#), and with the right energy policy reforms at the UK Government level can be more cost-effective than gas boilers. Heat networks are shared heating systems which can be ideal for smaller flats or apartment blocks*.
- **Enable all homes to meet a minimum standard of energy efficiency by 2033, by rolling out support for homeowners to install home insulation within the next parliamentary session.** This goes hand-in-hand with the transition to clean heating and is vital for ending fuel poverty. Scotland has a shocking amount of poorly insulated buildings, wasting heat and adding to bills. Improving energy efficiency by itself could reduce average energy bills and carbon emissions by around 15%^{3*}.

1 Changeworks (2025) Heat in Buildings Bill: Costs and Benefits. Available upon request.

2 Consumer Focus Scotland (2014) Economic Impact of Improving the energy efficiency of fuel poor households in Scotland. Available upon request.

3 Changeworks (2025) Heat in Buildings Bill: Costs and Benefits. Available upon request.

* Note the figures in these asks are based on the latest May 2025 UK Committee on Climate Change advice and are subject to change as we interpret the advice.

Programmes to install clean heating and retrofit homes must be [fairly funded](#), including mechanisms to protect and support those with low incomes. The proposed East Lothian Heat project “[No heat is wasted, no home is cold](#)” is a great example of how community-owned renewable heat can be delivered at scale and with a focus on public value and community benefits.

Working with the UK Government to rebalance the electricity and gas price ratio is fundamental to delivering more affordable warmth and powering the transition to clean heat. In addition, a fair funding model must be developed to fairly distribute the costs of transitioning from oil and gas heating systems to clean heat sources. To be just, this must include full grant support to protect low-income households, alongside jargon-free and clear communication.

For further information:

- [Building Heat Resilient Neighbourhoods](#), Shade The UK, 2024
- [Affordable warmth: next steps for clean heat in Scotland](#), WWF Scotland, 2023
- [No home left behind: Funding a just transition to clean heat in Scotland](#), IPPR Scotland, 2024
- [How to make electricity cheaper](#), Nesta, 2025

Case study

‘If I can help one family get a warmer home, then I’ve succeeded.’ Stephen Love works as a stock condition and energy surveyor for a Greenock housing association. Every day, he pounds the streets checking out how he can get rid of cold homes and improve residents’ lives.

‘I’m born and bred Greenock and it’s one of the biggest areas of fuel poverty and poverty in general in Britain,’ he says.

‘I was in poverty when I was a kid but I didn’t realise it. Greenock, Port Glasgow – I think it’s getting worse. Amazon has left, EE has dramatically downsized, IBM is away. Going back to my granddad’s days the shipyards downsized. I want to do what I can for these kids and these kids’ parents. I do what I can through my job, which is in housing.’

Love has worked with River Clyde Housing in his current role for two years. Initially, he was carrying out external surveys, ‘cleaning gutters and so on’.

Since 2024 he and a colleague have been taking a look inside the association’s homes to see how they can help to improve the fabric of the buildings and cut fuel poverty.

‘That’s opened my eyes,’ he says. ‘I’m seeing damp and mould issues first hand and on a daily basis. We are out as a team to do a full survey of the property’s energy use. It gives us an accurate real-time view of what the house needs.

‘We look at external wall insulation, cavity wall insulation – which gets a bad name because it’s often installed incorrectly – and we look at other ways of reducing heat loss.’

Love’s job is to recommend short-term fixes, such as upping the depth of loft insulation, or servicing the seals on a tenant’s windows to ensure draughts don’t get in.

He also suggests longer-term solutions, which could not only cut tenants’ heating bills but help reduce greenhouse gas emissions. ‘New ways of heating could be electric heat pumps, geothermal heating, joining to district heat networks or putting in small-scale heat networks in areas that we already own,’ he explains.

‘But the big thing is making it affordable for the tenant. There’s no point in putting brand new technologies in properties that can’t contain the heat.’

Love is passionate about using whatever means necessary to get his clients’ homes warmer – he mentions a robot that could help his team get under floors to put in insulation, for example. But what’s really important, says Love, is making sure the people living in the homes know how to make the most of any new technology.

‘We all need educated on new technology, such as heat networks or heat pumps,’ he explains. ‘They create a constant temperature and some tenants may not be aware of that – educating them is the first stage of helping them with their comfort levels and helping them out of fuel poverty.

‘For me, growing up with damp and mould was normal, but it shouldn’t have to be like that,’ he adds. ‘If I can help one family get a warmer home then I’ve succeeded.’



►Lead the transformation to a circular, wellbeing centred economy

To achieve our climate targets, protect natural resources, and deliver a just transition we need to shift to a socially just, circular, wellbeing-centred economy.

In Scotland, we use [more than twice the sustainable limit for resources](#), but the environmental and human impact of this consumption is often hidden. Our total consumption emissions are about [20% larger than our territorial emissions](#) and [rose 14.6% between 2020 and 2021](#) (the last year measured). This effectively means that consumption in Scotland is unsustainably high and we are offshoring emissions.

The next Scottish Government should **introduce statutory, science-based carbon and material footprint targets, aiming to reduce Scotland's carbon footprint to net zero by 2045, with progress reported annually**. When the Scottish Government consulted on the Circular Economy Bill in 2022, [86% of responders supported consumption reduction targets](#).

While Scottish Ministers have been required to report occasionally on emissions attributable to Scottish consumption of goods and services since 2010, no specific targets to reduce these emissions currently exist. By focusing more on production and re-processing of resources in Scotland, this policy would benefit nature protection and restoration, as well as for local community wealth and health. Only by accounting for our global impact can Scotland play its part in a truly sustainable future.

For more information:

- [The case for consumption-based targets](#), Friends of the Earth Scotland, 2022

The [Circular Economy \(Scotland\) Act](#) was passed in June 2024 with unanimous cross-party support. It must be implemented quickly, focusing on actions at the top of the waste hierarchy, while recognising the urgent and shared need to implement fairer and more sustainable resource use and enable a path for all nations to work together on solutions that benefit everyone. Priority actions should include investment in reuse and repair, implementing an ambitious Extended Producer Responsibility programme and enforcement of single use plastic bans.

The Scottish Government plans to introduce circular economy targets in 2027 and these must include, as the main targets, carbon and material footprint targets.

Shifting to a circular economy through regulation, enforcement and investment to stop resources being wasted would create jobs, improve our health and wellbeing, help to protect precious natural resources and reduce our international consumption footprint. Additionally, this could help tackle Scotland's litter emergency: [nine in ten people consistently view litter as a problem](#).

It is estimated that [preventing 10,000 tonnes of waste destined for incineration would lead to the loss of one incineration job and the creation of 386 jobs in circular businesses](#). To ensure that these are decent, fair and high-value jobs, investment in training, skills and education is needed. One opportunity is to facilitate better gender balance in the circular economy, as only [1 in 4 circular jobs in the UK are held by women](#), predominantly in low-paid or voluntary roles. Circular business models and supply chains should be built on inclusive and democratic business models, which can provide high-quality jobs, such as cooperatives, employee-owned businesses and social enterprises. Government support needs to ensure that efforts for community wealth building and the circular economy are joined up and mutually reinforcing.

The next Scottish Government should **create due diligence measures for creating fair and sustainable supply chains of critical minerals used in Scotland**. In the UK, [4 out of 5 people want to see stronger laws holding corporations to account for the damage they do to people and nature](#). The Scottish Government can take the lead on this by minimising harm in our supply chains through due diligence measures. These include commitments to human rights and environmental protections in the supply chains used by public sector organisations operating in Scotland and developing guidance to help public and private sector organisations comply with these standards.

For more information:

- [Rethinking our Resources](#), Friends of the Earth Scotland, 2024

Historically, investment and focus on resource management has largely centred on recycling. To achieve a true shift to a circular economy the next Scottish Government should **invest in reuse infrastructure**. Everyone in Scotland should have access to reuse services and it should be as easy to reuse something as it is to buy new. This would boost employment and skills, provide affordable goods during a cost-of-living crisis and directly address over consumption by keeping goods in use longer and reducing demand for new items. Funds could be raised through Extender Producer Responsibility Fees, and [these should be extended to include litter in the future](#).

Local authorities should receive support to establish high-quality “Set Aside for Reuse” facilities at every local authority Household Waste Recycling Centre in Scotland. They should also co-design bulky reuse services and provide more local collections points for reusable items. These services should be designed in line with [Zero Waste Scotland best practice](#) and make reuse the first choice above recycling or disposal. Organisations representing disabled people should be involved in the design of facilities for recycling, reuse, and repair.

For more information:

- [Reuse First Policy Manifesto](#), Circular Communities Scotland, 2025

Economic policy is too often treated as separate from addressing climate change and is designed to serve goals that can work against a just transition. Examples include the pursuit of economic growth at all costs and continued government support for polluting industries. Unless climate and economic policies are aligned, we will fail to meet our climate targets and miss opportunities to benefit our health, create jobs and protect nature.

The next Scottish Government should **commit to revising the National Strategy for Economic Transformation, the Green Industrial Strategy and all other economic policies, refocusing them to serve a wellbeing economy and a just transition, and fully align with circular economy principles**.

Despite rhetorical support for a wellbeing economy the [National Strategy for Economic Transformation](#) has [not effectively put these principles into practice](#). Furthermore, the more recently published [Green Industrial Strategy](#) has been criticised for lacking the comprehensive actions needed to ensure a just transition to a sustainable economy.

While a Wellbeing and Sustainable Bill is currently making its way through the Scottish Parliament, the resulting legislation must live up to its ambition during the next parliamentary term and beyond. This means that, regardless of the current Bill’s outcome, MSPs must ensure this or future legislation achieves a fundamental shift in how social and economic policy is formulated and implemented. This will require:

- Clear definitions of ‘wellbeing’ and ‘sustainable development’;
- Stronger duties on Ministers and public bodies to promote and deliver the National Outcomes;
- Clearly articulated participatory approaches to their creation,
- The establishment of a Future Generations Commissioner to provide support and scrutiny.

Delivered well, this Bill would help shift the focus towards preventative spend in Scotland, while closing the existing implementation gap on key national priorities.

For more information:

- [Wellbeing Economy Policy Design Guide: How to design economic policies that put the wellbeing of people and the planet first](#), Wellbeing Economy Alliance
- [Towards a Wellbeing and Sustainable Development \(Scotland\) Bill](#), Scotland’s International Development Alliance, 2022
- [Creating a Caring Economy: A Call to Action](#), Women’s Budget Group, 2020



►Build stronger resilience to climate impacts

The next Scottish Government should demonstrate its commitment to building climate resilience by **establishing a Climate Adaptation Fund for Scotland that, at least, meets the investment required to implement all of the commitments in Scottish National Adaptation Plan 3 by 2029.**

Climate impacts are already harming lives and livelihoods, and extreme weather is becoming the new normal. We are seeing droughts causing issues of water scarcity in the north east, affected farmers crop yields and food and drink industries. Wildfires are undermining efforts to increase tree cover, causing 'catastrophic damage' to wildlife and affecting our health. Rapid erosion of coastlines is threatening homes and our cultural heritage.

An [Ipsos UK study](#) revealed significant public concern about climate impacts, along with shock and some anger that the public was not made aware of how severe these impacts could be and how soon they are likely to be felt.

Urgent action is needed to reduce our emissions to play our part in preventing further climate damage. However, reaching net zero alone is not enough: support is also necessary to help communities and businesses adapt to build resilience to current and future impacts. This support must be targeted towards the people and places most vulnerable to climate risks. There are many examples of locally-led adaptation actions across Scotland that, with additional and coordinated support, could help build resilience for the most climate-vulnerable communities.

Adaptation measures should also be designed to benefit nature recovery and support biodiversity, for example the [Scottish Wildlife Trust Riverwoods project](#).

For more information:

- [Climate change trends and projections](#), Adaptation Scotland



Scotland's climate coalition





Scotland's climate coalition

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