



## Stop Climate Chaos Scotland briefing in advance of the debate on “Scottish Government Priorities: Tackling the Climate Emergency”

### Introduction

SCCS warmly welcomes this debate. It reflects that “tackling the climate emergency” is, rightly, one of the First Minister’s top four priorities. In his [“Priorities for Scotland” statement of 22 May 2024](#), the First Minister said:

*“The threat posed by the climate emergency – and the twin crises of climate change and biodiversity loss – is real and present, but so is the opportunity to successfully reach net zero and beyond”.*

SCCS commends the recognition of the twin crises and the prioritisation of tackling this emergency. This briefing sets out the context for this and examines how the Scottish Government has (or has not) grasped the opportunity described. Based on this review, the briefing suggests issues or questions that might be raised in the debate.

### Context

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

The UN Secretary General, António Guterres, recently said: *“humanity is on thin ice — and that ice is melting fast”*. He called on the world’s nations to *“massively fast-track climate efforts by every country and every sector and on every time frame”*. Similarly, Lord Deben, the outgoing chair of the Committee on Climate Change, has said: *“our children will not forgive us if we leave them a world of withering heat and devastating storms where sea level rises and extreme temperatures force millions to move because their countries are no longer habitable. None of us can avoid our responsibility. Delay is not an option”*.

Scotland has been a global climate leader. When our 2009 Climate Change Act first set targets for emissions’ reductions, they were “world-leading” – and this was sustained by the 2019 Act’s amendments. The Scottish Government has also championed international action and committed funds to climate justice and to Loss & Damage.

These steps are very welcome and strongly supported by SCCS and our members. However, our current net-zero targets are now no longer unusual (other countries have matched them) – and Scotland is now off-track for actually meeting these targets.

On 18 April 2024, [the Cabinet Secretary responded](#) to the Climate Change Committee’s latest advice, announcing a proposal to revise the targets framework and seeking to reinvigorate action. Unfortunately, [analysis of the measures announced](#) indicates that they lack ambition and much additional effort is needed to get anywhere near to delivering the emission reductions needed.

Then, on 18 June 2024, [official statistics for emissions in 2022](#) revealed that the annual target for reductions was missed again – meaning that **Scotland has now missed its targets in nine of the past thirteen years**. On the following day, the [Cabinet Secretary’s statement](#) confirmed that the Government’s *“legislative proposals on a new emissions reduction framework will include establishing five-yearly carbon budgets”*; and that *“the bill is introduced as soon as possible after recess”*. The statement also listed a number of welcome achievements, contributing to the 50% reduction in emissions since 1990, and reiterated the commitment to achieve Net Zero by 2045. However, it was disappointingly light on proposals for action to ensure that emissions reductions get back on track and that the future budgets and 2045 target can be achieved.

### Issues/question to raise/ask in debate:

In the light of the above, **Members may wish to raise concerns or ask questions on the following matters – to assess the extent to which the Scottish Government may (or may not) be “tackling the climate emergency”**.



### **1. Proposed climate legislation**

In the light of Scottish Government proposals for further climate legislation, outlined above, SCCS has considered how any change from annual/interim targets to a system of five-yearly carbon budgets might be achieved, while also retaining Scotland's climate leadership ambitions. We therefore recommend that the Bill: -

- must not amend the 2045 target date for reaching net zero.
- must ensure that carbon budgets are set in accordance with (or are more stretching than) the Climate Change Committee's recommended pathway to net zero by 2045.
- should make provision for long-term, sectoral targets/pathways to 2045.
- should retain annual accountability mechanisms such as progress reports and statements to Parliament by Ministers.
- should retain international aviation and shipping in Scotland's climate targets.
- should not permit any carry forward mechanism.
- should require periodic reviews, by the CCC, of carbon budget levels.
- should require the next Climate Change Plan (CCP) to be produced as soon as possible after the first carbon budget has been set, and set out fully costed proposals, and that this and subsequent plans should have a section comparing the Scottish carbon budgets and progress towards them against the previous interim targets (2030, 2040).
- should retain the just transition and international climate justice principles, as set out in the current legislation, and ensure they are applied to all climate change policy actions. In so doing, the Scottish Government should reconfirm its commitment to UNFCCC principles and international obligations.
- recognises the key international principle that the "polluter pays".

More information on these recommendations can be found in the [SCCS briefing: Proposed legislation to revise framework for emissions reduction targets](#).

**Members may wish to ask the Cabinet Secretary or Ministers to confirm that the proposed legislation will take account of some or all of the above matters.**

In addition to the legislation framework for emissions reductions framework, the key domestic policy matters, where action is needed, are heating, agriculture and transport – as well as a number of matters that are reserved to the UK government.

### **2. Heat in buildings**

Emissions generated from the way in which we heat buildings is a large part of Scotland's overall emissions and one of the top three areas where urgent action is needed. The latest emissions statistics reported a reduction in emissions from buildings since 2021; however, the report also notes that "a combination of elevated fuel prices and relatively mild temperatures at the start of 2022" were the principal reasons for this fall".

Thus, the need for policy measures to maintain, continue and speed up this fall are vital – and, fortunately, following the Scottish Government's recent consultation and proposals for a Heat in Buildings Bill, these are available. In addition, these proposals have been commended by the Climate Change Committee.

**Members may wish to ask the Cabinet Secretary or Ministers when the expected Heat in Buildings Bill will be introduced, and whether it will deliver the policy measures set out in the consultation.**

### **3. Agriculture**

The second sector where action to reduce emissions is urgently required is agriculture. SCCS notes the recent passage of the Agriculture and Rural Communities (Scotland) Bill – and welcomes the inclusion of "climate mitigation and adaptation" as part of the overarching objectives of agricultural policies (see s.1). However, while the establishment of this framework is welcome, there is now an urgent need for delivery.



**Members may wish to ask the Cabinet Secretary or Ministers what steps they intend to take, and when, to reform agricultural support schemes to encourage emissions reductions from farming and agricultural land**

#### **4. Transport**

Reducing emissions from transport is the third significant area where action is needed – not least in the light of the report on emissions in 2022, which showed increases in emissions from both international aviation and shipping (IA&S) and domestic travel (partly as a result of continued ‘rebound’ from the pandemic).

To address this, there is an urgent need for policies related to IA&S (see below), to reduce private car mileage and encourage greater use of public and active travel.

In light of this, **Members may wish to ask the Cabinet Secretary or Ministers:**

- **When the route map to reduce car-km by 20% will be published, and what policy measures it will contain?**
- **What additional policies will be introduced to support the expansion of train, tram and bus services, and increased use of those services?**
- **What additional funding will be provided to deliver more active travel?**

#### **5. Matters that are reserved to the UK government**

As noted above, and in regular Climate Change Committee reports, emissions in Scotland are driven by both UK and Scottish Government policies, and there is a continuing need for both improved policies by the UK Government in reserved matters and increased cooperation between the two governments.

In light of this, **Members may wish to ask the Cabinet Secretary or Ministers:**

- **What plans they have to engage with the new UK Government after 4 July 2024?**
- **Whether the Scottish Government will continue to support a presumption against new Oil & Gas licences (as proposed in the draft Energy Strategy) and, if not, why not?** (note that Uplift has a specific briefing on oil and gas, which SCCS supports).
- **What plans they have to press the new UK Government to develop and implement new policies, in reserved matters, that will reduce emissions from transport, such as road pricing, reforms to fuel duty and Vehicle Excise Duty, and addressing IA&S?**

#### **6. International**

The domestic policy issues discussed above are important in their own right (future targets will not be met without such action). However, there is also a need to get ‘back on track’ in order to retain or regain Scotland’s, previously creditable, leadership and credibility on the international stage. This leadership can also be supported by continuing international action – such as those welcome interventions, made by the Scottish Government, in relation to climate justice and loss and damage.

**Members may wish to ask the Cabinet Secretary or Ministers if/how existing commitments on climate justice and loss and damage will be maintained, and what plans they have to develop these in future, including attendance at COP29?**

#### **About Stop Climate Chaos Scotland:**

- Stop Climate Chaos Scotland (SCCS) is a diverse coalition of over 70 organisations campaigning together on climate change.
- We believe that the Scottish Government should take bold action to tackle climate change, with Scotland delivering our fair share of action to limit temperature rises to 1.5 degrees and supporting climate justice around the world.
- Our coalition members range from environment, faith and development organisations to trade and student unions and community groups.
- Our work is led by our members and is normally focussed on lobbying decision makers in Scotland, but we also work on UK-wide campaigns when appropriate with our sister organisations in England (The Climate Coalition) and Wales (Stop Climate Chaos Cymru).
- For more information visit [www.stopclimatechaos.scot](http://www.stopclimatechaos.scot).