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Policy

Climate change

Directorate: [Energy and Climate Change Directorate](#)Topic: [Energy](#), [Environment and climate change](#)[Choose section](#)

Overview

We are transitioning to a net zero emissions Scotland for the benefit of our environment, our people, and our prosperity. We also need to adapt and build resilience to the impacts of climate change alongside our actions to reduce emissions.

Scotland's ambitious climate change legislation sets a target date for net zero emissions of all greenhouse gases by 2045. Our contribution to climate change will end, definitively, within one generation.

To meet Scotland's targets, a rapid transformation across all sectors of our economy and society is required. We published our [draft climate change plan 2026-2040](#) in November 2025, which is open for [public consultation](#) until 29 January 2026

Our [Net Zero Nation website](#) provides information for individuals, communities and organisations about what they can do to tackle the climate emergency, and learn more about the action that all of Scotland is taking.

Actions

We are:

- [reducing greenhouse gas emissions](#) through a Just Transition to a net zero economy and society, ensuring the journey is fair and creates a better future for everyone – regardless of where they live, what they do, and who they are
- driving Scotland's [adaptation to climate change](#)
- supporting [decarbonisation in the public sector](#)

- engaging with [business and industry on decarbonisation](#)
- engaging the public and encouraging people to move towards [low carbon living](#)
- [supporting communities](#) to tackle climate change
- leading [international action on climate change](#)
- supporting developing countries to tackle climate change through the [Climate Justice Fund](#)
- jointly administering the [UK Emissions Trading Scheme \(UK ETS\)](#) alongside the UK Government, Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Executive. Read [more information](#)
- keeping track of how efficiently nitrogen is being used through a national-scale [Scottish Nitrogen Balance Sheet](#)
- delivering a [just transition](#), by working with communities, business, industry and the people of Scotland to plan for our net zero future

Background

Our environment and economy are intrinsically linked, and Scotland's transition to a more prosperous, net zero emissions economy is already well underway.

In direct response to the UN Paris Agreement, Scotland's landmark Climate Change Act is one of the most ambitious legislative frameworks for emissions reduction in the world. We have created jobs and backed innovative new industries while winning international respect for our ambition and leadership on climate change.

The [Paris Agreement](#) will support a worldwide market for low carbon goods and services, as other countries have committed to reducing their carbon footprint. It will also enhance the long-term international competitiveness of low carbon business in Scotland by ensuring that more eco-friendly business practices are adopted elsewhere.

Most of the low carbon economic activity in Scotland so far has been associated with the provision of renewables and low carbon electricity, but there is significant economic turnover for some other sectors, including provision of energy efficiency products and low carbon services.

Low carbon investments may provide an opportunity for more balanced regional development within Scotland. Beyond the opportunities presented by renewable technology, smaller businesses across Scotland will also benefit from engaging in climate change mitigation through energy efficiency and low carbon heat and by promoting sustainable practices.

By setting a 2045 target for net zero emissions of all greenhouse gases, we continue to provide certainty and impetus to markets, businesses and industries to shift towards low-carbon technologies and practices.

Independent advice

Committee on Climate Change

An independent statutory body, the [Climate Change Committee](#), has an important role in providing expert advice as part of our approach to climate change. Scotland's climate change legislation sets out a statutory role for the Committee, and we request regular advice, including an annual Scottish progress report on reducing emissions, advice on emissions reduction targets and regular independent assessments of Scotland's adaptation programmes.

Just Transition Commission

The first [Just Transition Commission](#) began its work at the start of 2019. It was chaired by Professor Jim Skea, who was joined by eleven other commissioners including representatives from academia, industry, trade unions and the environmental movement. The Commission was asked to provide practical advice to Scottish Ministers on maximising the economic and social opportunities of meeting our climate change targets, while managing the risks and challenges.

The Commission spent just over two years, engaging widely across the country. They adopted a broad interpretation of just transition, considering a wide range of implications of net zero beyond solely employment. They published their [final report](#) in March 2021.

A renewed Just Transition Commission launched in December 2021 with a delivery focus, and will provide scrutiny and advice on the Scottish Government's just transition plans. The Commission, chaired by Professor Jim Skea, will also advise on approaches to monitoring and evaluation, undertake meaningful engagement with those most likely to be impacted by the transition, and engage and collaborate with other sources of expertise. As part of its regular engagement with the Minister for Just Transition, Employment and Fair Work, it will publish an annual report to reflect on Scotland's progress.

Scotland's Climate Assembly

Scotland's Climate Assembly was set up as a result of an amendment to the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 introduced through the Climate Change (Emissions Reductions Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019. The Assembly operated independently of the Scottish Government, bringing together a group of over 100 people who were broadly representative of the Scottish population. As Scotland's Climate Assembly members were aged 16+, members of Children's Parliament were also invited to support the participation and engagement of younger children across Scotland. This ensured their views, experiences and ideas informed the discussions and recommendations going forward.

The [Assembly published its recommendations](#) in June 2021, and we [published our response](#) in December 2021. We are now taking these actions forward as part of our climate change policy work, and have [requested further action from the UK Government where action is needed](#).

The Assembly was unique in offering members a chance to consider our response to their recommendations, and provide a further [statement](#).

Following the conclusion of the Assembly process, [an independent research report was published in March 2022](#), on the process, impact and Assembly members' experience.

You can [find out more about the Assembly's work](#) at an archived version of its website.

Bills and legislation

The [Climate Change \(Scotland\) Act 2009](#) was amended by the [Climate Change \(Emissions Reduction Targets\) \(Scotland\) Act 2019](#), increasing the ambition of Scotland's emissions reduction targets to net zero by 2045. The 2019 Act also updated arrangements for climate change plans to meet the targets and included new measures, such as creation of a Citizens Assembly and a Scottish Nitrogen Balance Sheet.

In November 2024, the Scottish Parliament passed the [Climate Change \(Emissions Reduction Targets\)\(Scotland\) Act 2024](#) which introduced the framework for a carbon budget-based approach for setting emissions reduction targets.

Carbon budgets, which cover a five-year period, provide a more reliable and consistent framework for assessing sustained progress in the actions and policies that contribute to ensuring that we achieve Net Zero emissions by 2045.

In comparison, the previous framework of interim and annual targets proved to be highly vulnerable to year-to-year fluctuations in emissions reductions. For example, the assessment of progress could be adversely affected by annual variations, such as a particularly warm or cold winter, or larger events, such as the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Following publication of the Climate Change Committee's [Scotland's Carbon Budgets](#) advice on 21 May 2025, the Scottish Government set Scotland's carbon budgets at the levels recommended in this advice. This was done through the [Climate Change \(Scotland\) Act 2009 \(Scottish Carbon Budgets\) Amendment Regulations 2025](#), which came into force on 10 October 2025.

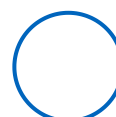
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