

# Leaders' Climate Emergency Checklist



This **Climate Emergency Checklist** is designed to enable senior leaders in the public sector to assess their organisation's maturity and capability in tackling the climate and nature emergencies.

Public sector leadership is critical to addressing the climate and nature crises, a triple challenge of making a just transition to net zero, adapting to a changing climate and enhancing the state of nature.

This checklist offers a high-level assessment of where action is needed on embedding climate emergency (and nature) responses including adaptation and mitigation in public sector service planning and delivery.

The checklist equips leaders to understand legislative responsibilities and align with national and local policy developments while ensuring a just transition that delivers sustainable benefits for Scotland's people and environment.

The Sustainable Scotland Network (SSN) developed this Checklist in partnership with the SSN Steering Group, SOLACE, COSLA and the Improvement Service.

## How to use this checklist?

The checklist involves a self-assessment of your organisation against the themes of:



Targets



Strategy



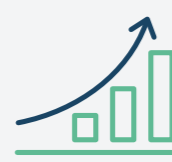
Governance



Delivery



Finance



Performance



Skills

This will help prioritise action and inform the development of a programme of measures to drive the necessary transformational change.

## Why use this checklist?



Contribute to national emission targets  
(mitigation)



Prepare for the impacts of climate change  
(adaptation)



Tackle the **nature emergency** and use nature based solutions



Act in a way which delivers the **Just Transition**

The Scottish Government, with support from the Scottish Parliament, has committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions to Net Zero by 2045, with a 75% emission reduction by 2030. Key policy areas with high emissions reduction potential are transport, food, heat and procurement.

All public sector organisations have Climate Change Duties under Part 4 of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009<sup>1</sup>:

....to contribute to the delivery of Scotland's national emissions reduction targets ('mitigation');

....to help deliver Scotland's statutory climate change adaptation programme;

....to act in a way that it considers is most sustainable.

Public sector bodies must report annually<sup>2</sup> on compliance and are increasingly setting their own targets. All bodies should have adopted the national targets as a minimum – an illustrative Net Zero Statement<sup>3</sup> developed by the Scottish Government, can be adapted for use.

Delivering these ambitions presents huge challenges in terms of the pace of action and the skills and finance required. The public sector is crucial to the implementation of national and local climate policy which is recognised in the Public Sector Leadership on the Global Climate Emergency Guidance<sup>4</sup> published by Scottish Government and SSN. Most sectors, including the public sector, will need to reduce emissions close to zero without offsetting for Scotland to meet its national climate change targets.

Urgent action and delivery through collaboration and partnership working is essential. The longer the delay in taking action the greater and faster the reduction in emissions required and the greater the risks from the changing climate. We are already seeing impacts from changes in rainfall intensity and frequency causing more flooding and drought conditions; and heatwaves affecting health and well-being.

**Acting now will deliver optimal benefits for Scotland's people and places while minimising risks and costs.**

<sup>1</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2009/12/part/4](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2009/12/part/4)

<sup>2</sup> <https://sustainablesotlandnetwork.org/reports>

<sup>3</sup> <https://sustainablesotlandnetwork.org/uploads/store/mediaupload/1890/file/NZ%20Illustrative%20Statement.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/public-sector-leadership-global-climate-emergency/>



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**Interpretation:** Action on climate change includes mitigation, adaptation, the nature emergency and Just Transition measures in the exercise of a public body's functions.

**Delivering co-benefits and avoiding unintended consequences:** Action on climate change can help deliver National Performance Framework outcomes.

**Scope of action:** Public bodies act on climate change through what they control and influence, including corporate activities, procurement supply chains, and the places and partnerships they serve.

	<b>Foundation</b> (Structured and Focused)	<b>Advanced</b> (Comprehensive and Professional)	<b>Exemplary</b> (Innovative and Transformational)	Improvement Actions
<b>Strategy</b>	Action on climate change is a strategic corporate priority.	Key areas for action have robust strategies in place to inform delivery.	Climate change is embedded in all organisational strategies and plans, and shapes decision making and resource allocation.	
<b>Targets</b>	Targets set with clear baselines, boundaries, inventories and interim targets, supported by delivery pathways and aligned with national policy objectives.	Targets/outcomes set for key functions of the body, including procurement/supply chains, upstream and downstream impacts of the body's functions.	Targets/outcomes go beyond net zero, aimed at regenerative and holistic sustainability transformations.	
<b>Governance</b>	Structures are in place to ensure oversight, accountability and transparency in climate-related decision making.	Climate change embedded into decision making at all levels, with evidence reported of how this influences decisions on plans, projects and resources.	The body is proactively influencing partners, citizens and stakeholders to drive change at scale, locally, regionally and nationally.	
<b>Delivery</b>	Climate action incorporated in policy development and service design, with policies and projects in place and actively managed.	Coordination of delivery across service areas and projects to maximise benefits and avoid unintended consequences.	Working collaboratively to align and scale policies, projects and partnerships on climate action.	
<b>Finance</b>	Investigating how to align spend with targets and steps being taken to progress.	Understanding of how to align spend with targets. Finance gaps identified and work underway to secure resources.	Resource and spend clearly aligned with targets, climate impact of investments being managed, and collaborations in place to leverage in resources.	
<b>Performance</b>	Mandatory climate change reporting used to inform delivery and communicate progress.	Progress on climate change is part of regular performance monitoring and accounts and corrective actions taken.	Monitoring is above and beyond mandatory requirements and reporting is shared and reviewed with stakeholders.	
<b>Skills</b>	Key staff aware of how climate change is part of their roles and responsibilities.	All staff understand how climate change fits into their activity and key staff taking action to embed climate change.	All staff empowered to act and contribute to climate targets and outcomes.	