Leaders' Climate Adaptation Checklist

What is this?

This **Climate Adaptation Checklist** allows you, as a senior leader, to rapidly benchmark your organisation and identify the next steps needed to be adaptable to Scotland's changing climate.

This will support you to continue to deliver a high-quality public service.

This document is an adaptation-specific companion to the **Leaders' Climate Emergency Checklist** developed by the Sustainable Scotland Network (SSN) in partnership with SOLACE, COSLA and the Improvement Service. SSN is Scotland's public sector network on sustainability and climate change.

What is climate adaptation?

Climate adaptation means preparing for and coping with the impacts of climate change. It's about building resilience so communities, businesses, services, and nature can handle current and future challenges.

Why does it matter for my organisation?

Climate disruption is here and now, impacting lives and costing us billions.

Scotland is already experiencing the effects of climate change – flooding, heatwaves, rising sea levels and increasingly severe storms.

Left unchecked, climate change impacts will be vast. From damage to critical infrastructure, pressures on nature and ecosystems, disruptions to travel and supply chains for essentials like food and impacts on peoples' physical and mental health.

More change in unavoidable.

But Scotland can adapt and be resilient, alongside meeting our Net Zero goals.

What actions must I take?

Effective and inclusive adaptation requires:

- Proactive planning within your organisation
- Strong partnerships across sectors and communities
- Committing sufficient resources to adaptation actions

The actions in this checklist will help you to lead an organisation that continues to deliver high-quality public services in Scotland's changing climate.

In Scotland, **public bodies have legal duties under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009** to help deliver the Scottish National Adaptation Plan and must report annually. The current national plan (SNAP3) requires public service providers to have the governance, culture, skills and resources for effective and inclusive adaptation action.

SNAP3 also emphasises the need to work together around a place or region. This is vital because it helps deliver fair decisions that work locally; because no single body has all the resources, skills or authority; and because climate impacts can hit one sector and quickly spread to others through connected systems like food, energy, and water.

What support is available?

SSN is Scotland's public sector network that enables collaboration and provides support on climate change and sustainability, including on statutory public bodies climate change duties reporting.

Adaptation.Scot is the digital hub for resources to support your organisation.

You can find tools to help with adaptation planning, information on future climate projections, and access to peer-exchange networks:

- Use the **Climate Adaptation Capability Framework** – a routemap of 42 tasks (and associated resources) to build organisational capability. Use this to navigate complexity and track progress.
- Join the **Public Sector Climate Adaptation Network** – a professional network of over 60 public bodies sharing learning and benchmarking progress. Join this to build staff skills and confidence.
- Use the **Met Office's climate data** – local climate risk information for your local authority area. Use this to understand your climate risks.
- Join a **Climate Ready regional partnerships** – collaborations to build climate-resilient regional economies. Join these to work in partnership with others.

Leaders' Climate Adaptation Checklist

	Foundation (Structured and Focused)	Advanced (Comprehensive and Professional)	Exemplary (Innovative and Transformational)	Improvement Actions
Strategy	Our corporate priorities include building climate resilience.	We have published a climate adaptation strategy/plan.	All key decisions take into account Scotland's climate future using appropriate climate pathway scenarios.	
Targets	We understand how extreme weather affects our organisation today, and how that will change in the future.	Key functions have robust plans in place with clear outcomes for adapting to the impacts of a changing climate.	We are tracking progress, and refining our actions over time to manage evolving climate impacts.	
Governance	Structures are in place to ensure oversight, accountability and transparency in climate-adaptation decision-making.	Climate adaptation and resilience is embedded into decision-making, with evidence reported on how this influences plans, projects and resources.	We are collaborating with partners, stakeholders and citizens to take action on climate adaptation.	
Delivery	Existing adaptation work has been recognised and initial actions delivered.	Our climate adaptation strategy/plan is coordinated and prioritises delivery of adaptation actions across services and projects.	Through collaboration, our actions are delivering benefits beyond my organisation's immediate boundaries.	
Finance	We know how much weather-related disruption is currently costing, and how that might change, due to climate change.	We understand what we need to spend to deliver established adaptation outcomes, and this investment need is integrated into budget decisions and long-term financial planning.	Corporate resources are aligned with adaptation outcomes to ensure long-term value for money, and our partnerships are leveraging funds and maximising co-benefits.	
Performance	Our statutory climate reporting includes accurate and high-quality information on the status of our climate risk assessments and adaptation planning.	Our corporate performance monitoring systems include climate impacts (e.g. weather-related disruptions, progress of adaptation actions, benchmarking against the Adaptation Scotland Adaptation Capability Framework).	Best practice is shared with stakeholders and we are refining and monitoring our actions over time to manage evolving climate impacts.	
Skills	Key staff have a strong understanding of climate risks and vulnerabilities and they participate in adaptation networks.	Responsibilities across the organisation are defined and staff are aware of their own role in delivering the corporate adaptation strategy/plan, supported by training or learning opportunities.	Staff are empowered to lead adaptation by contributing to planning, sharing expertise and collaborating internally and externally to strengthen organisational resilience.	

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This table shows how the **adaptation checklist** maps back to the **climate emergency checklist**.

		Foundation	Advanced	Exemplary
Strategy	Climate emergency	Action on climate change is a strategic priority.	Key areas for action have robust strategies in place to inform delivery.	Climate change is embedded in all organisation strategies and plans, and shapes decision making and resource allocation.
	Adaptation	Our corporate priorities include building climate resilience.	We have published a climate adaptation strategy/plan.	All key decisions take into account Scotland's climate future using appropriate climate pathway scenarios.
Targets	Climate emergency	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 function.	Targets/outcomes go beyond net zero, aimed at regenerative and holistic sustainability transformations.
	Adaptation	We understand how extreme weather affects our organisation today, and how that will change in the future.	Key functions have robust plans in place with clear outcomes for adapting to the impacts of a changing climate.	We are tracking progress, and refining our actions over time to manage evolving climate impacts.
Governance	Climate emergency	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.
	Adaptation	Structures are in place to ensure oversight, accountability and transparency in climate-adaptation decision-making.	Climate adaptation and resilience is embedded into decision-making, with evidence reported on how this influences plans, projects and resources.	We are collaborating with partners, stakeholders and citizens to take action on climate adaptation.
Delivery	Climate emergency	Climate action incorporated into 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.
	Adaptation	Existing adaptation work has been recognised and initial actions delivered.	Our climate adaptation strategy/plan is coordinated and prioritises delivery of adaptation actions across services and projects.	Through collaboration, our actions are delivering benefits beyond my organisation's immediate boundaries.
Finance	Climate emergency	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 resources.
	Adaptation	We know how much weather-related disruption is currently costing, and how that might change, due to climate change.	We understand what we need to spend to deliver established adaptation outcomes, and this investment need is integrated into budget decisions and long-term financial planning.	Corporate resources are aligned with adaptation outcomes to ensure long-term value for money, and our partnerships are leveraging funds and maximising co-benefits.
Performance	Climate emergency	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.
	Adaptation	Our statutory climate reporting includes accurate and high-quality information on the status of our climate risk assessments and adaptation planning.	Our corporate performance monitoring systems include climate impacts (e.g. weather-related disruptions, progress of adaptation actions, benchmarking against the Adaptation Scotland Adaptation Capability Framework).	Best practice is shared with stakeholders and we are refining and monitoring our actions over time to manage evolving climate impacts.
Skills	Climate emergency	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.
	Adaptation	Key staff have a strong understanding of climate risks and vulnerabilities and they participate in adaptation networks.	Responsibilities across the organisation are defined and staff are aware of their own role in delivering the corporate adaptation strategy/plan, supported by training or learning opportunities.	Staff are empowered to lead adaptation by contributing to planning, sharing expertise and collaborating internally and externally to strengthen organisational resilience.

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