



Member Briefing

Global Climate Emergency and Scotland's Net Zero Emissions Targets

Purpose of this Briefing

This briefing is based on work by the Sustainable Scotland Network Steering Group to respond to the First Minister's declaration of a climate emergency, and to the Scottish Government's commitment to a legally binding target of reaching net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2045 at the latest.

The briefing sets out critical policy priorities, themes and actions that the SSN Steering Group think need to be addressed in order to realise the potential of Scotland's public sector on climate action. On behalf of the Steering Group, the SSN Chair has shared this with officials in the Scottish Government.

It is equally intended as a useful tool for all SSN members and public bodies. Please use this briefing to help inform your plans and work in response to the climate emergency declarations and revised net zero target. It can be shared with colleagues and other teams, including senior officials to help identify and prioritise critical themes within your organisation and area.

We are keen to keep updated on activities and plans across the public sector so please share your insights and feedback with us and with other members. The best way to do this is via our Group on the Knowledge Hub. If you are not part of this space, please [request membership online](#).

Sustainable Scotland Network
August 2019

Response to the Climate Emergency and Net Zero Target

SSN is Scotland's network of public sector climate change specialists and leaders. The network has a vital role to play in legislation, planning, delivery and evaluation of climate change solutions. SSN is committed to supporting the public sector to respond effectively to the climate emergency. To supporting climate change leadership and mobilising action across our membership. In order to unlock the huge potential of the public sector to do more, the SSN Steering Group (together with our member-led, thematic Action Groups) has identified the following critical themes matched with actions and offers.

Sustainable Scotland Network

Edinburgh Centre for Carbon Innovation
High School Yards, Edinburgh, EH1 1LZ

e: info@sustainableScotlandnetwork.org | w: sustainableScotlandnetwork.org | [@SSNscotland](https://twitter.com/SSNscotland)

1. Governance, planning and partnerships

- a) Embed climate change duties more actively in the constitutions and corporate planning arrangements of public bodies, including new ones such as Public Health Scotland.
- b) Lead and support regional/place-based partnership working across the public sector. This should include steps to encourage application of the Place Standard Tool to facilitate cross sectoral, integrated action and ensure environment and climate considerations are part of the new Place Standard three-year plan.
- c) Ensure existing mechanisms, including community planning partnerships, regulatory planning and the new National Planning Framework facilitate public bodies' corporate decision making, and align with broader national policies and plans to avoid conflicting priorities at the local, delivery level.
- d) Use SSN to improve alignment of public sector action on climate change. Improved vertical alignment from national to local delivery, and horizontal alignment across public sector organisations is needed to achieve systematic change and empower local public sector partnerships.

2. Infrastructure

- a) City Region Deals have the potential to help deliver net-zero only if carbon metrics are applied. Inclusive economic growth must include the policy objectives set out in the Climate Change Plan.
- b) Introducing professional standards and metrics for zero carbon, circular economy and green infrastructure will help long-term investors to better understand investment risk and the opportunity for impact, allowing them to deploy faster and at larger scale, unlocking billions of pounds in new investment.
- c) The Infrastructure Commission in its recommendations later this year must include priorities to support the Scottish Government's delivery of its National Infrastructure Mission and the development of its next Infrastructure Investment Plan that respond to the climate emergency.
- d) A national delivery mechanism (co-developed between Scottish Government and SSN) providing informed dialogue, broader governmental guidance, technical support and new resourcing will help to accelerate and de-risk investment in heat networks, while also assessing expansion for district heating, and a net zero route-map for deep retrofit schemes.

3. Finance, investment and procurement

- a) Review, strengthen and, where necessary, increase public sector powers to raise new investment and secure new, innovative and flexible financial streams.
- b) In line with the planning of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy, the Scottish Government should undertake reviews of spending beyond 2020-21 in order to allocate dedicated budgets.
- c) With a stated commitment to have climate at the core of the forthcoming spending review, the SSN sees an opportunity to improve the public sector's ability to understand, access and coordinate public sector spending to deliver the national emission targets.
- d) Ensure the new Scottish National Investment Bank is trusted and effective in its mission to help finance the zero-carbon economy, supporting innovation and skills development.
- e) Support the efforts of public bodies to orientate public sector pension funds away from fossil fuels and into climate investment.
- f) SSN supports the Cabinet Secretary's commitment to see structural changes to our procurement processes and assessments. Working with national government and the wider public sector, SSN is keen to develop professional support, including guidance and information to decarbonise and green all supply chain services and products.

4. Reporting, measuring impact and informing decisions

- a) Public bodies climate change duties reporting is now a transparent and well-established practice in Scotland. We welcome the intention of the Scottish Government to work with SSN and its members to improve public sector reporting, to make it more effective in tracking and comparing progress and informing decision making. Professional planning, monitoring, reporting, including improved carbon impact assessment and the development of investable project registers aligned to the national Climate Change Plan, needs to be further developed across the public sector.
- b) We encourage the Scottish Government to be bold in investing resources to ensure high quality climate change planning, monitoring and reporting by public bodies. This should include continued investment in SSN to ensure that public sector capacity to report is built and maintained, and also investing in the tools that would allow better climate change planning and reporting across the public bodies, so that what matters gets measured, and what's measured gets managed.

5. Co-benefits and wider influence

- a) The co-benefits of policies and actions to reduce emissions are increasingly well known but yet to be fully costed. New tools and indicators need to be developed and used by the public sector to quantify and formally acknowledge multiple benefits, including health and equality. This will help to build a much stronger business case for action and will accelerate whole systems thinking.
- b) Addressing the triple challenge of net zero, adaptation and the state of nature including the biodiversity crisis demands that all land development planning and policies must provide multiple benefits.
- c) The SSN has experience in using the Scottish Government's Individual, Social, Material (ISM) Framework to facilitate whole-system thinking and approaches. Our expertise in this area can be used by national and local bodies and wider communities to accelerate partnerships and collaboration.

Supporting documents and links

- [IPCC 1.5C Report](#), October 2018
- [First Minister declares Global Climate Emergency](#)
- [Net Zero – The UK's contribution to stopping global warming, Committee on Climate Change Report](#), May 2019
- [Cabinet Secretary statement to Scottish Parliament on Global Climate Emergency](#), 14 May 2019
- [Stage 2 Report on the Climate Change \(Emissions Reduction Targets\) \(Scotland\) Bill, Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee, Scottish Parliament](#), June 2019
- [SSN Summary Analysis Report for Public Bodies Climate Change Reports for the period 2017/18](#), March 2019
- [Extinction Rebellion](#)
- [Climate Change \(Emissions Reduction Targets\) \(Scotland\) Bill timeline](#)
- [Just Transition Commission](#)

About the Sustainable Scotland Network

The SSN is Scotland's network for public sector organisations and professionals. We support public bodies to fulfil their climate change duties and we manage climate change reporting for the Scottish Government. We help build capacity among our professional members and support a steering group of



public sector leaders on climate and sustainability. We have over 700 individual members across Scotland's public sector and work directly with all 180 major players including Scottish Water, SEPA, Historic Environment Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage, all 32 local authorities, NHS Scotland, Scottish Universities and Colleges and others.

To become a member or to update your membership details please email us at:

info@sustainablesotlandnetwork.org

For further information on the SSN Steering Group [visit our website](#).