



# Scottish Labour Party Scottish Policy Forum Consultation Climate Change Action

## Introduction

The development of Scottish Labour's manifesto for the 2021 Scottish Parliament elections is proceeding in a series of stages enabling maximum participation by our members and stakeholders. Some issues do not fit into the general policy headings because they have cross-cutting considerations.

One such issue is the action required to deliver on Scotland's climate change targets equitably. This consultation paper seeks views on this issue.

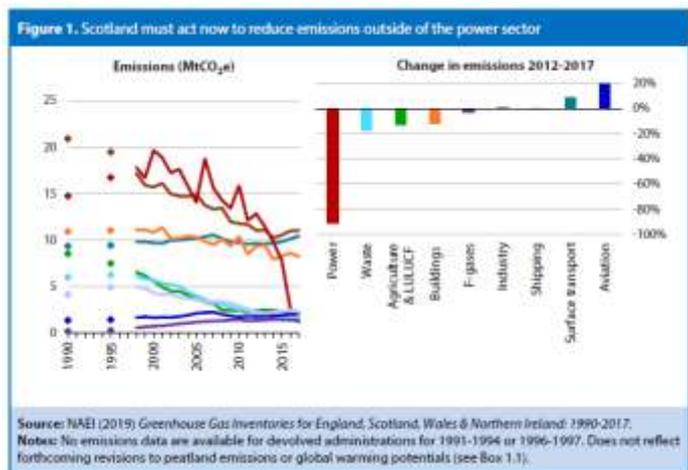
Scottish Labour understands that climate change is the biggest challenge we face as a country. We believe that Labour principles are the ones which are needed to solve it - public sector leading, controls on industry, the polluter pays, social and public enterprise, investment and inclusion. Our policies on climate change can also help achieve other policy objectives.

## Context

The Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019, which amends the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, sets targets to reduce Scotland's emissions of all greenhouse gases to net-zero by 2045, with interim targets for reductions of at least 56% by 2020, 75% by 2030, 90% by 2040. Net-zero is the point where the same volume of greenhouse gases is being emitted as is being absorbed through offsetting techniques like forestry.

The 2019 Act also embeds the principles of a Just Transition, which means reducing emissions in a way that tackles inequality and promotes fair work, at the heart of Scotland's approach to reaching net-zero. Scotland has also declared a climate emergency.

The UK Committee on Climate Change (CCC) said Scotland's 2045 date for net-zero emissions was a "step-change in ambition" for the country. As the hosts of the COP26 climate summit, Scotland and the UK now needs to "walk the talk"<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> <https://www.theccc.org.uk/2019/12/17/new-ambitious-actions-needed-for-a-net-zero-scotland/>

In November, around 30,000 people will visit Glasgow for COP26. Countries are being asked to submit their new long-term goals to implement the 2015 Paris Agreement, to stay within the 1.5C ceiling on temperature rises that scientists say is necessary to avoid disastrous consequences.

In her speech at COP25, Greta Thunberg said: *"Finding holistic solutions is what COP should be all about. But instead, it seems to have turned into some kind of opportunity for countries to negotiate loopholes and to avoid raising their ambitions."*

A Scottish Labour amendment to the Act enshrined in law our obligation as a developed country to consider the Global South in our climate change decisions and actions.

Scotland needs to demonstrate that we are not just a world leader in climate change ambition, but that we can also lead in climate change action.

## **Challenges**

The UN Emissions Gap Report 2019<sup>2</sup> says that global emissions must fall by 7.6% every year from now until 2030 to stay within the 1.5C ceiling on temperature rises. The current pledges made by countries under the Paris agreement would cause temperature rises of about 3.2C this century.

Climate change no longer seems just a future threat. In 2019, major fires in Australia, Russia and California burned over 13.5 million hectares of land – an area four times greater than the size of Belgium. Major floods and cyclones displaced over four million people in Bangladesh, India and Iran, while entire townships were laid to waste by storms. The climate emergency is characterised by an age of fires, human disasters, species extinction and the Arctic melting. Across the globe, these impacts hit those who have done the least to create climate change the most. There are also serious impacts in Scotland and the UK in terms of extreme weather events and flooding happening now and affecting our communities.

There's more to climate change than global temperature. In January 2020, 11,000 scientists signed a paper<sup>3</sup>, which tracks a broader set of indicators to convey the effects of human activities on greenhouse gas emissions, and the consequent impacts on climate, our environment, and society.

There is still a significant climate change denial/delay international lobby, funded mainly by fossil fuel companies<sup>4</sup>. They seek to question the scientific consensus, twist the economics and challenge the impact on humanity. The aim is to encourage politicians to turn away from the climate emergency.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.unenvironment.org/resources/emissions-gap-report-2019>

<sup>3</sup> <https://academic.oup.com/bioscience/article/70/1/8/5610806>

<sup>4</sup> <https://theconversation.com/the-five-corrupt-pillars-of-climate-change-denial-122893>

Scottish Labour believes that we should not allow the people with the most privilege and power to convince us to delay saving our planet from climate change.

Every person in the UK is responsible for around 5.8 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>; each person in India 1.8 tonnes. The Office for National Statistics has said the UK had become the biggest net importer of carbon dioxide emissions per capita in the G7 group of wealthy nations, outstripping the US and Japan, as a result of buying goods manufactured abroad. This is also an indicator of the failure of industrial strategy and the need to take a different course through a Green Industrial Revolution.

We need an updated Climate Change Plan which will deliver on the targets, breaking them down by sector, and with links to a new economic strategy that mobilises public and private investment.

The public across the globe understand the need for action. A recent poll surveyed more than 1,000 people in the UK, Canada, Germany, Italy, Brazil, France, Poland and the US. It found that at least three-quarters of the public think the world is facing a “climate emergency”, with climate breakdown at risk of becoming “extremely dangerous”. Our climate change actions must win popular support for the transition – a movement that can overcome delay and obstruction.

The debate over whether climate change is happening is over. We now need to focus on what should be done. Targets alone will not remove a single molecule of carbon dioxide and other emissions from the atmosphere. In this paper, we outline some of the strategies that could make a real impact on climate change, while improving our quality of life and bringing new, good work to our communities across Scotland.

## **Green Industrial Revolution**

Labour’s Green Industrial Revolution<sup>5</sup> calls for massive investment in renewable energy and low-carbon infrastructure, sweeping changes to how public transport services are owned and operated and an overhaul of agriculture subsidies to prioritise conservation and habitat restoration.

While the UK Government’s modest 25-year environment plan is an inadequate response to the climate emergency, there are actions we can take in Scotland under devolved powers. People in cold, damp homes waste over £400 on gas every year, and fuel poverty is a challenge for many households. Retrofitting homes would employ thousands of people, and the resulting health benefits of warmer homes could save the NHS millions.

We can also use the Scottish Investment Bank to introduce a Worker’s Ownership Fund to enhance support for co-operative and employee-owned businesses. Increase investment in research and development as well as investing in skills and training. A regeneration fund could be used to breathe life back into our high streets, supporting Community Wealth Building to generate sustainable jobs locally.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://labour.org.uk/manifesto/a-green-industrial-revolution/>

A real industrial strategy, including the creative use of government procurement, will stop the reduction of emissions by simply offshoring jobs. Scotland has a long history of innovation and our engineers are leading the way in the development of renewable technologies and establishing hydrogen as a viable energy source. We need to ensure that new technologies are not just invented here, but are engineered, manufactured and exported from here. There are also significant opportunities for re-manufacturing as part of the circular economy.

The changes needed in our industrial and energy strategies have to be accompanied by a Just Transition for the workers and communities most affected. Otherwise, the low carbon transition risks increasing inequality. The interim Just Transition Commission report highlighted that the Government had not managed to maximise the opportunities of decarbonisation, as the recent loss of contracts to manufacture turbines for a wind farm off the Fife coast showed. We believe this needs sectoral plans, guarantees of job security, training and labour market measures, including sectoral bargaining, which help people move to the new jobs. Scottish Labour is clear that the Just Transition Commission should be enshrined in law to guide and support the long-term process of the shift to net zero emissions fairly.

As the UK government will not invest on the scale envisaged by Labour, we will need to act creatively to generate the required investment. That means focusing available borrowing at the national and local level to invest in the Green Industrial Revolution, recognising and valuing future benefits. We should tax those most responsible and redirect dirty subsidies. The New Economic Foundation (NEF) has set out<sup>6</sup> some ways of doing this.

#### **Question**

The Green Industrial Revolution and similar Green New Deal plans have attracted widespread support. How can we implement these plans using devolved powers and generate the necessary investment and manufacturing jobs in Scotland?  
How can we ensure that the appropriate skills strategy is developed across all sectors – initial, transferable and lifelong?

#### **Transport**

Transport is responsible for more than a third of Scotland's greenhouse gases, while estimates suggest air pollution causes upwards of 2,500 deaths every year. Our transport policies need to focus on promoting environmental sustainability, helping people to become less reliant on their cars.

Bus services carry more passengers than any other mode of public transport, but annual bus passenger numbers in Scotland have fallen by 106 million over the last ten years. Scottish Labour led on a legislative change to lift the ban on local councils running bus services. We now need to fund the up-front costs of running bus services and move towards the introduction of universal free bus travel. This also requires the bus fleet to move to net-zero by 2030, and we look forward to the bus forum's 'Vision for 2030' report in April.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://neweconomics.org/2019/11/five-ways-to-fund-a-green-new-deal>

Ending the failed ScotRail franchise in 2022 is an opportunity to bring at least part of our railways back into public ownership. However, Scottish Labour believes we need to rebuild the fragmented railways as a nationally integrated public service. We also need to deliver electrification, line expansion and more station stops, as well as promoting the use of rail freight. Urgent decisions are needed<sup>7</sup> on how to power trains because while cars are typically in service for 10 years, trains carry on for 40 or even 50 years, long past our decarbonisation targets. Towns and cities can be more pedestrian and cycle-friendly with policies such as the creation of freight consolidation hubs and electric delivery van arrangements.

Phasing out the use of diesel and petrol cars will be vital to reducing transport emissions and tackling air pollution. Much more needs to be done to build the necessary infrastructure and support the development of ultra-low emission vehicles, including support for taxi workers to transition. There are a range of transport sector manufacturing opportunities which can be built on with the appropriate support.

Air travel is set to be the biggest source of UK emissions by 2050. 1% of UK travellers are responsible for 20% of all flights abroad, while half the population did not take a single flight. The Committee on Climate Change has suggested that a 'frequent flyer levy' would help curb the growing demand for air travel. Tourism and travel is not necessarily the enemy of climate action, but 'Responsible Tourism' has to demonstrate it is more than a slogan.

The best way to tackle emissions is to invest in active travel infrastructure. This means urgent action on land-use planning to create towns and cities where walking and cycling are the best choices. The Bee Network<sup>8</sup> initiative in Greater Manchester is an example of such an approach, which could increase journeys on foot or by bike by 2.5m a day, cut some journey times by 50% and save the NHS £6.73bn by improving people's health.

### **Question**

What further actions can we take, primarily using devolved powers, to reduce transport emissions more quickly and build a sustainable, affordable, accessible and integrated transport system?

## **Energy**

The world's nations are on track to produce more than twice as much coal, oil and gas as can be burned in 2030 while restricting the rise in the global temperature to 1.5C<sup>9</sup>. The UK, despite its net zero emissions targets, subsidises fossil fuel production at home and abroad, and supports the maximum economic extraction of oil and gas from the North Sea. The oil and gas

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<sup>7</sup> <https://theconversation.com/decarbonising-britains-railways-demands-urgent-action-heres-how-it-could-be-done-124905>

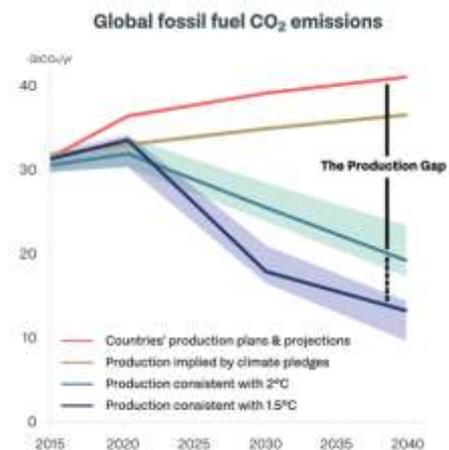
<sup>8</sup> <https://tfgm.com/bee-network/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://productiongap.org/2019report/>

industry argues that maximum economic recovery is necessary to meet energy demands in the foreseeable future and to reduce reliance on imports.

Scottish hydro, wind and wave power is essential to achieving the transition to the sustainable fuel sources we need. The aim is to meet 100% of Scotland's electricity demand from renewable sources by 2020. That still leaves heat decarbonisation, which will require the roll-out of technologies like solar hot water and hydrogen and investment in district heat networks.

It remains to be seen if Ofgem's new climate action plan<sup>10</sup> is more than yet another tinkering around the edges of the failed energy market.



Scottish Labour recognises the need to tackle the immediate priorities around issues like fuel poverty, including rural fuel poverty, and grasp the importance of ownership of our energy assets. We support a national energy company that can give direction and inject investment on a large scale – which develops new generation capacity, with local supply chains, engaging councils and local communities under common and co-operative ownership.

#### Question

While Scotland has made progress in decarbonising our electricity systems, what further action should we take to address the decarbonisation of our heating systems?

### Housing

Energy use in buildings accounts for 20% of Scotland's total emissions. A quarter of Scottish households remain in fuel poverty, 39% of pensioner households and the statutory target to eliminate it was missed by the SNP.

We need to provide new investment in energy efficiency, including a commitment to eradicating fuel poverty by 2032. We also need a new definition of fuel poverty that includes an uplift for rural communities and a minimum standard of energy efficiency in private rented sector housing.

#### Question

How can we fund an upgrade of Scotland's 2.6 million homes to the highest energy standards to reduce fuel poverty and cut emissions?

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/publications-and-updates/ofgem-s-decarbonisation-action-plan>

## Agriculture and Land Use

We recognise the link between the reform of food production and sustainability, including energy use, water, biodiversity, soil, food waste and land use. It has been estimated that in the absence of change, by 2050, over half of the global warming gases will come from food production. Scottish agriculture is responsible for 23.9% of Scottish greenhouse gas emissions. Climate change has also damaged the sector through the cost of extreme weather.

A recent WWF report<sup>11</sup> argues that Scotland's farmers could "comfortably" reduce their emissions by 38% over the next 25 years using established technologies. Farm level and system-wide changes could see greenhouse gas emissions fall by the equivalent of 2.9 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub>. It also suggests cutting the use of nitrogen fertiliser in the soil and using additives in cattle feed. There are similar concerns over some pesticides. However, the report warns added expenditure could be prohibitive without financial support.

The Government also has a broader role in supporting the necessary changes in our food system by supporting community growing and local food economies that help local businesses thrive and help everyone to access food produced in their local area. Scottish Labour also recognises the need to tackle food poverty and promote good work across the food chain in the Good Food Nation Bill.

We are clear that forestry and woodland planting targets and action must play their part. There are community opportunities which also enhance wellbeing. Peatland restoration will also continue to play an essential role in the shift towards net-zero emissions. Land justice measures, such as those recommended by the Scottish Land Commission, should also be reflected in climate action plans.

### Question

The practices and systems needed to cut agricultural emissions are well understood. As part of the Just Transition process, what actions are required to ensure financial and knowledge barriers are addressed, along with wider changes to the food system  
What new arrangements are needed to create an appropriate land use strategy, and should this be statutory?

## Environmental action

Scottish Labour supports measures that deliver a circular economy, including obligations on the producers of waste – voluntary actions are not enough. This includes the implementation challenges around deposit return schemes. We recognise the case for moving towards a polycarbonate ban and requiring food manufacturers and retailers to do more to reduce waste.

We sought to amend the Planning Bill to give individuals and environmental organisations the right to challenge decisions that will have a severe impact on the environment. Labour will also

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.wwf.org.uk/sites/default/files/2019-12/WWF%20Net%20Zero%20and%20Farming.pdf>adequately funded on the basis of further research

protect our peatlands and introduce carbon impact assessments into all policy processes. We must ensure that the opportunity to sequester carbon in our marine environment is adequately funded.

We face an environmental emergency that requires the same urgent response as climate change. We welcome the publication of the Environment Strategy as it offers some long-overdue reassurance that our environment and biodiversity will be protected and enhanced. The Scottish Government must prove this Environment Strategy is not yet more warm words.

Many of the climate change mitigation actions will be nature-based. We will also develop a coherent Biodiversity Action Plan for post-2020 for land, air and sea, with adequate funding, which the whole country can coalesce around before it is too late.

We need greater investment in climate adaption, which recognises the risks of flooding with coastal protection, river basin management and flood prevention schemes.

As with so many other policy areas, we must ensure that Brexit is not used as an excuse to weaken environmental standards, thorough legislation or trade deals. Many conservation groups have urged<sup>12</sup> the Scottish Government to introduce an environment act guaranteeing that legal rights available within the EU continue after Brexit, while also enshrining the guiding environmental principles in devolved law and ensuring that monitoring and enforcement mechanisms are robust.

We need to persuade more people to carry refillable bottles and cut down on single-use plastic. This may require a public sector duty to expand water fountains, better access to water in schools and reform of Scottish Water.

This also reflects the importance of climate action on health from infancy and adolescence to adulthood and old age. It is the young and the elderly who are most at risk from the health consequences of climate change as highlighted in the 2019 Lancet Countdown report on health and climate change<sup>13</sup>.

Tree planting and other forms of carbon offsetting are welcome, but we should recognise that this is not a substitute for cutting emissions. Negative emissions technologies may have a role to play, but most are untested at large scale.

**Question**

How can we protect and strengthen environmental standards?

How can we make it easier for organisations and individuals to act sustainably and support those on low incomes?

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/jun/26/climate-crisis-tree-planting-and-new-left-economics>

<sup>13</sup> [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(19\)32596-6/fulltext?dgcid=etoc-edschoice\\_email\\_tlclimate19](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(19)32596-6/fulltext?dgcid=etoc-edschoice_email_tlclimate19)

## Finance

The financial sector has an important role in taking action on climate change. Mark Carney recently highlighted that the financial sector had begun to curb investment in fossil fuels – but far too slowly. He said leading pension fund analysis *"is that if you add up the policies of all of companies out there, they are consistent with warming of 3.7-3.8C"*.

Scottish public sector pension funds have taken only limited action on climate change. Few even have credible processes in place to assess the impact of their investments. No fund has a divestment policy, and few can evidence positive investment in the low-carbon transition.

The focus on economic growth, as measured by GDP, needs to change. The process of generating GDP growth often has an environmental impact, including more pollution and waste. Scottish Labour is therefore attracted to the ideas being developed by the Labour government in New Zealand around the concept of a wellbeing economy. It recognises the importance of measuring this for the sake of our planet and our people's present prosperity and intergenerational equity.

We also need to consider new ways of financing the Green Industrial Revolution and other environmental action. This includes using the wide-ranging fiscal powers available to the Scottish Government and public sector borrowing.

There also needs to be a conversation at UK level around reform of VAT and carbon taxation, which remains a policy most likely to move us closest to achieving global environmental targets. There is also scope for national and local levies that penalise environmentally damaging activity and encourage sustainable activity.

### Question

How can we finance additional investment in the low-carbon transition and ensure our financial system plays a constructive role?

What levy mechanisms would be most effective in achieving our climate change actions and what should they be used for?

Should we develop a Future Generations Bill to commit to intergenerational equity?

## Conclusion

The action required to deliver on our climate change targets cannot simply be done by Government imposing top-down solutions. It requires grassroots action and social innovation, changing social norms and behaviour as much as technology. A (low carbon) net-zero economy can mean many more jobs, but we must ensure that there is a Just Transition, which doesn't leave any community behind.

In this paper, we have attempted to outline some of the challenges and solutions, which should enable Scotland to progress from climate change rhetoric to climate change action. We would welcome your views, both through the questions posed and beyond.

The issues discussed in this paper are part of our policy programme consultation process. It is not a statement of Scottish Labour policy.

Contributions and submissions are welcome. Please email submissions to: [ScottishPolicyForum@labour.org.uk](mailto:ScottishPolicyForum@labour.org.uk)

When making a submission, please include the name, address, email and phone number of the submitting organisation or individual.

The deadline for submissions for this document is **1 May 2020**.