



Statement of Response

On behalf of the membership of Scotland's Climate Assembly, we commend the Scottish Parliament for establishing the Assembly and the Scottish Government for providing a considered response.

Across Scotland, and within our Assembly, there are different views on the pace of change needed to address the climate emergency, but it must be addressed.

We know it will take time to engage with communities to enact the changes needed fairly and consistently for all, so we need the Scottish Government to take things forward with a sense of urgency.

We believe, from the Scottish Government's response to our recommendations for action, that Government needs to think less about what they can't do and instead demonstrate a positive attitude, thinking hard about how they can make things happen.

Members of the Assembly overall are disappointed with the Government's response to many areas of our recommendations, as it does not appear to recognise the urgency behind the Assembly's recommendations for action.

Throughout the Government's response there are many pledges using words like 'consider' and 'explore'. We would like to see a clearer roadmap, with more ambitious targets. We want the Government to commit to more specific actions, targets and timescales and to report back to us as a matter of urgency, so that we are able to hold them to account for delivery.

We think the Scottish Government allocation of funds to address our recommendations that you have indicated you will implement should be separate, specific and ring fenced.

We want to ensure that each gets adequate funding from the budget, without being too prescriptive.

As an example, in response to our recommendation 4 about a National Reuse Charter, the Government said that their £70 million Recycling Improvement Fund is also available for reuse initiatives. This is unacceptable, because there is no guarantee that any of this money will be spent on reuse, it could go 100% on recycling and 0% on reuse.

It also seems to us that there are impactful 'quick wins' that have been rejected.

For example, the Government could have committed to leading by example in public catering procurement (our recommendation 26) and to a public education campaign about sustainable diets (our recommendation 39).

As Covid-19 has proved, public education campaigns can work quickly.

We still believe that, in order for consumers to make informed choices, it is vital that carbon labelling is introduced.

The Assembly would ask the Scottish Government to do more to encourage the UK Government to consider this. In addition, we would urge the Scottish Government to demonstrate good practice in doing this themselves wherever possible.

In regard to our goal for more sustainable land use in Scotland to achieve emission reductions (Goal 9), and particularly in relation to the two accompanying Children's Parliament Calls for Action and our recommendation on marine carbon sequestration (44), we feel there is too much description in the Government's response of activity that is already underway and not enough commitment to new and ambitious activity.

We think the Scottish Government should commit to engaging more proactively with farmers, other land users, and those who know and work in the marine environment, to inform a better response to the climate change crisis and biodiversity loss, and in particular address the destructive activity of industrial fishing.

We are pleased that Government acknowledges that focussing on the circular economy offers an enormous opportunity for Scotland and directly contributes to benefiting local communities and tackling the climate emergency.

We believe that greater ambition and sustainable investment into circular economy activity will engage local communities, contribute significantly to education and behavioural change in regard to the climate crisis, and build healthier and happier communities.

However, we feel the Government's response again simply lists a number of Bills and plans that are already underway and lacks clear and ambitious targets, and the investment needed, to stimulate and empower local communities to further innovate and develop circular economies at local and regional level.

We acknowledge some positive elements in the Government's response to our recommendation on community land ownership reform.

But since land use planning is under Scottish Government control we were expecting more ambition in this area. We maintain that to address the climate emergency we need to give communities more control over Scotland's underused land.

One way the government should do this is to further increase its funding for the Scottish Land Fund. The proposed increase is not enough.

We are concerned that the Government's response to our goal of retrofitting homes across Scotland to reduce carbon emissions (Goal 3) will push more people into fuel poverty.

We feel their response did not provide enough detail about how the Government is going to protect low income families (including the working poor) in the move to decarbonise homes.

We believe that the Government's response to a just transition for all needs to be more practical, and that one way Scotland should create the finance needed is through existing taxation powers at local level, for example by increasing taxes on power companies through a land tax on energy installations.

Overall we think that there needs to be more urgency and creative thinking in introducing new sources of public funding, which will be essential to delivering a just transition, for example further taxing high carbon emitters.

We acknowledge Government is making good progress with our goal relating to work and volunteering, in particular the green training and apprenticeship scheme (Goal 12).

Moving forward, the Scottish Government needs to increase awareness about the measures that are already in place and explain how they will measure the success of these schemes in cooperation with local groups and local authorities.

Air travel is a major and disproportionate source of emissions and we are disappointed in the Scottish Government's response to our recommendations to reduce the impacts of flying in Scotland, and particularly their lack of engagement with our aim to eliminate frequent flyer and air mile bonuses.

We also believe we need to raise the air departure tax, especially for more frequent flyers, and that Government must work with airline companies to put pressure on them to label, at point of purchase, the emissions from flights to encourage people to re-consider unnecessary travel.

We are also disappointed in the Scottish Government's response to banning single use plastic and non-recyclable packaging, in particular banning plastic bags as called for by the Children's Parliament (Recommendation 2).

We want the Government to move quicker to introduce legislation to ban these and also to consider further measures to reduce plastic use across Scotland.

We feel that the Government's response to our recommendations about reducing the cost and increasing the use of public transport doesn't go far enough.

We welcome Government moves to implement free transport for some groups (particularly the older and the young) but we feel that this doesn't do enough in terms of helping low income families access public transport.

We would still like to see the development of something like an 'oyster card' (our recommendation 28) in Scotland to enable low income families to access discounted transport.

It is also important to us that the number of providers of transport services are more integrated, provide services that better reflect local needs and that the standard of the fleet being used (especially buses) is improved to reduce carbon emissions, for example by upgrading to alternative fuels.

Overall the Assembly is not content with the common response from the Government to our recommendations being that 'we don't have the powers'. We believe that the Scottish Government has failed to test how far it can utilise existing powers to deliver and needs to do so.

We are concerned about different levels of Government not effectively communicating with each other.

We need a joined-up approach to make the best use of time and resources to maximise efficiency, reducing duplication. We are calling on the Scottish Government to improve in this area.

We also want more emphasis given to how the three devolved nations will collaborate more and have influence to put pressure on the UK Government to devolve more powers to Scotland for addressing the climate emergency and to upholding Scotland's and the UK's commitment from COP 26.

It is crucial that the Scottish Government prioritises tackling the most damaging climate issues first, guided by expert advice, and brings forward public engagement on climate issues to help drive the political will, with cross-party working together to drive more immediate action with clear commitments.

We are however concerned that the Government may not act in the way that they have indicated, and that there is a lot of activity and spend that may not lead to tangible outcomes.

We want Government to create a Score Card for Scotland with 10 Key Performance Indicators (decided by independent experts) with clear numerical and measurable targets based on areas of greatest impact on climate change.

This information should be updated bi-annually in an easily accessible and understandable format, and published in a one-pager. The information reported on should include "leading" areas such as number of wind farms, heat pumps, public transport usage etc. and lagging areas such as vehicle emissions, air-miles etc.

The report should indicate for each target where there has been positive change and areas where targets have not been met. The Score Card should contain annual projected outcomes showing progressive improvement until the target has been reached and then maintained.

We are clear that we want Government to be bold and take an innovative approach to policy development.

This must involve working together with local councils, communities and climate experts, towards shared goals and targets. We would like Scotland to be leading work to tackle the global climate emergency, both within the UK and around the world, to ensure positive ambition with urgent action.

We think the Government must ensure that education is a key priority for our collective mission in Scotland to tackle the climate emergency.

The current understanding of our climate impact among adults and businesses is not enough. More action needs to be taken to increase the public awareness and adjust their priorities, in order to meet the urgent timeline of the climate emergency.

Finally, to enable the important work of Scotland's Climate Assembly and Children's Parliament to continue, we collectively agree it is essential to have an ongoing and sustained dialogue between the Government and the Assembly and the children.

We strongly believe the Government can upscale their current commitments further to meet the ambitions of our recommendations and shorten their current timescales. Going forward we expect the Government to ensure that we can hold them accountable for this via an annual review.

Scotland's Climate Assembly



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