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Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee

Annual Report of the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee for 2021/22



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Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee

To consider and report on matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport.



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Committee Membership



Convener
Dean Lockhart
Scottish Conservative
and Unionist Party



Deputy Convener
Fiona Hyslop
Scottish National Party



Natalie Don
Scottish National Party



Jackie Dunbar
Scottish National Party



Liam Kerr
Scottish Conservative
and Unionist Party



Monica Lennon
Scottish Labour



Mark Ruskell
Scottish Green Party

At a Glance

NZET committee activity at a glance



142

Number of people who gave evidence



Reports published



31

Committee meetings



SSIs considered



3 Petitions considered

Source:

Introduction

1. This report covers the work of the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee (NZET) during the parliamentary year between 13 May 2021 and 12 May 2022. The Committee was established in June 2021.
2. The role of the Committee is to consider and report on matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport.
3. There was no membership change in this Parliamentary year.

Inquiries and Reports

The role of local government and its cross-sectoral partners in financing and delivering a net-zero Scotland

4. [This inquiry](#) seeks to identify the main barriers at a local level to Scotland reaching its net zero targets. It considers what practical steps councils are taking to break them down, in partnership with business, the voluntary sector, and local communities. It will also highlight areas where change will be needed if councils are to play a full role in helping achieve the goal of a net zero Scotland.
5. The inquiry is also considering —
 - What role the Scottish Government and its agencies can play in both supporting and, where necessary, challenging local government to work well with its partners to deliver net zero; and
 - How local government can play its part in ensuring a “just transition” to net zero.
6. The inquiry started with [a call for views](#) which closed on 21 January 2022. We took initial evidence to determine key themes at three evidence sessions. Since March 2022, we have held a further three sessions exploring these themes in detail. We will continue our scrutiny and visits later in the year with a view to reporting in autumn 2022.

Energy Price rises

7. The Committee is undertaking a short “snapshot” [inquiry into energy price rises](#). The inquiry focuses primarily on short and medium-term solutions to high energy prices, longer term structural solutions, and the role of the Scottish Government in implementing these.
8. The Committee held four evidence sessions during April and May 2022, hearing from a wide range of stakeholders including academics, consumer representatives, energy companies and government officials. With evidence-taking now concluded, we expect to issue our findings in June 2022.

Evidence Sessions

Determination of Committee priorities for Session 6

9. At the start of the parliamentary session, the Committee agreed to spend its initial meetings in autumn 2021 hearing from a cross-section of major stakeholders relevant to the Cabinet Secretary's main responsibilities. The Committee took evidence from them over six meetings. This work contributed directly to the Committee agreeing our first work programme, including our work on local government and net zero and on carbon capture, usage and storage.

COP26 Outcomes

10. The Committee agreed that the UN Convention on Climate Change Conference of the Parties in Glasgow (COP26), its possible outcomes, and their likely impact on net zero policy in Scotland, should be another focus of early evidence sessions. We heard from Alok Sharma MP, President-Designate of COP26 ahead of the Conference, and then from experts and stakeholders in the immediate aftermath of the conference.

Fuel Poverty Strategy

11. The Parliament had the opportunity to scrutinise the Scottish Government's first statutory fuel poverty strategy before it was finalised. The Committee [took evidence](#) at one meeting from the Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport.

The Environmental Protection (Single-use Plastic Products) (Scotland) Regulations 2021

12. The Committee took evidence on Scottish Government legislation to ban certain single-use plastics. [We heard from](#) the Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity and from experts on how the regulations might affect the manufacture and supply of particular types of single-use plastic products.

Carbon Capture Utilisation and Storage (CCUS)

13. Carbon capture and storage is a technique for removing carbon dioxide produced by industrial processes from the air, compressing it, and storing it deep underground. This lowers greenhouse gas emissions. If carbon dioxide from industrial emissions is used to make chemicals, minerals, plastics or fuels, this is called carbon capture, utilisation and storage.

14. The UK and Scottish Governments, as well as the independent Climate Change Committee, all support carbon capture and storage as a part of the roadmap to achieving net zero. However, in October 2021, the “Scottish cluster” (centred around former oil and gas workings in the North Sea) was not one of the two clusters chosen for initial UK Government funding and support. Instead, it was placed on a reserve list.
15. On carbon capture and utilisation, there are a mixture of views on the type and scale of role it can play in the transition to net zero.
16. The Committee took oral evidence on CCUS in 2021 in order to better understand these complex issues at two meetings in December 2021. Following the sessions, we wrote to [the Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport](#) and [the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy at the UK Government](#) with some key questions. [The Cabinet Secretary replied to our correspondence in April 2022. The Secretary of State replied in May 2022.](#)

Climate Change Committee's Annual Progress Report

17. The Committee [heard from](#) the Climate Change Committee, the UK’s independent adviser on tackling climate change, on its annual progress report to the Scottish Parliament, published on 7 December 2021 – ‘[Progress reducing emissions in Scotland – 2021 Report to Parliament](#)’. The aim of the session was to keep the committee apprised of the Scottish Government’s progress on net zero. It also formed part of our evidence-taking on CCUS.

Budget 2022-23

18. Committees usually carry out “pre-budget scrutiny”; i.e. taking evidence and then writing to the Scottish Government, in advance of the publication of the each Scottish Government budget, which is usually in December.
19. The Committee [wrote to the Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport](#) in October 2021 highlighting key themes and questions relevant to pre-budget scrutiny from initial evidence sessions. [The Cabinet Secretary replied in December 2021.](#)
20. The Committee [took oral evidence](#) on the 2022-23 budget from the Scottish Government on 1 February 2022. [The Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport wrote to the Committee](#) in March 2022 to provide further information on matters raised at the meeting.

National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4)

21. Each national planning framework is a long-term plan for Scotland that sets out

where development and infrastructure is needed and the high-level principles and policies that are to be applied across the planning system in Scotland. Frameworks are laid in draft form before the Scottish Parliament for scrutiny and comment before they are finalised. The final plan is also laid for Parliamentary approval.

22. The NZET Committee was one of several committees to collaborate on scrutiny of the draft NPF4 laid by the Scottish Government in late 2021. The Committee held three evidence sessions focussing on themes most relevant to its remit: transport, energy, the natural environment and circular economy. We [reported to the Local Government Housing and Planning Committee](#) as lead committee for this scrutiny.

Workplace Parking Licensing (Scotland) Regulations 2022

23. The Workplace Parking Licensing (Scotland) Regulations 2022 make provision in relation to the process and review of workplace parking licensing proposals and decisions, as well as the management of licences and penalty charges.
24. A [motion to annul](#) the instrument was lodged by Graham Simpson MSP. The Committee [took evidence](#) from the Minister for Transport on this negative instrument before formally considering it. The motion was not agreed to.

Scotland's Climate Assembly

25. Scotland's Climate Assembly was made up of over 100 citizens tasked with examining expert evidence. The group produced recommendations for tackling the climate emergency in a fair and effective way over 8 weekends between November 2020 and February 2022.
26. The Committee [heard from the Climate Assembly](#) on their views of [the Scottish Government's response to their recommendations](#).

Transfer of Operation of ScotRail

27. Scotrail came under public ownership on 1 April 2022 when the Scottish Ministers became "operator of last resort". In advance of the transfer date, the Committee [took evidence](#) from key rail stakeholders and from the Scottish Government.

P&O Ferries Ltd

28. In March 2021 P&O Ltd sacked its UK seafaring staff without notice. [We wrote to Peter Hebblethwaite, Chief Executive Officer of P&O Ferries](#) to express concerns about the situation and received [a response](#) on the day we [took evidence](#) from him on this decision, the consequences flowing from it, the safety implications of the

decision, and its effect on Scottish ferry workers and services.

29. Following the sessions, we wrote to [the Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport](#), [the Minister for Transport](#), [the Secretary of State for Transport](#) with some key questions. We also wrote to the Chairs of the House of Commons Transport Select Committee and Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Select Committee to inform them of the Committee's views and actions. The Minister for Aviation, Maritime and Security replied to our correspondence on [8 April](#). The Minister for Transport wrote to the Committee on [24 March](#) and [11 April](#).

Legislation

30. In total, the Committee considered 20 Scottish Statutory Instruments during its reporting period—
 - 7 Draft affirmative
 - 13 Negative instruments, including one with a motion to annul (as mentioned above)
31. The Committee's Scottish Statutory Instruments reports can be found on [our webpage](#).

Legislative Consent Memorandum

32. A legislative consent memorandum in relation to the UK Environment Bill was referred to the Committee in 2021. This was a supplementary memorandum arising from amendments to the Bill, the initial memorandum having been taken in the Scottish Parliament near the end of the previous Parliamentary session. The supplementary memorandum considered new provisions on forest risk commodities and guiding principles on the environment. The Committee [reported on the LCM](#) in September 2021.

United Kingdom Subordinate Legislation

33. The Committee scrutinised:
 - 2 Consent Notifications where the Scottish Government sought consent for the UK Government to legislate in the UK Parliament on matters which are within the legislative competence of the Scottish Parliament.
 - 1 Negative UK Statutory instrument (joint instrument between the four administrations - Scottish, UK, and Welsh Governments, and the Northern Ireland Executive)

Petitions

34. The Committee considered three petitions during the parliamentary year.

35. [PE1872: Improve the reliability of island ferry services](#)

The Committee first considered the petition in November 2021 and agreed to keep the petition open and write to various stakeholders seeking information. At a further meeting in March 2022, we decided to run an inquiry into ferry services later in the year.

36. [PE1815: Translocate protected beavers to reduce licensed killing](#)

The Committee first considered the petition in November 2021 and agreed to keep the petition open and write to various stakeholders seeking information. At a further meeting in March 2022, we decided to seek further information relevant to the petition.

37. [PE1750: Independent Monitoring of Satellite tags fitted to raptors](#)

The Committee first considered the petition in March 2022 and agreed to keep the petition open and write to various stakeholders seeking information.

Equalities and Engagement

38. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, the Committee was not able to participate in face-to-face engagement activities for most of the year. However, we continued to engage on matters of interest through virtual sessions and we have also agreed a programme of visits for May June and September 2022 to inform our inquiry into the role of local government and its cross-sectoral partners in financing and delivering a net-zero Scotland.
39. Members of the Committee took part in a virtual workshop and conversation on 22 February 2022 with eight children and young people hosted by the Scottish Youth Parliament and the Children's Parliament. The event was an opportunity for the children and young people to share their climate call to action in the final weeks of the Scotland's Climate Assembly.

Meetings

40. During the parliamentary year, the Committee met 31 times. Of these meetings, 1 meeting was held entirely in private. Items taken in private comprised consideration of evidence heard, the Committee's work programme, approach papers, draft reports and correspondence.
41. This year, 142 witnesses appeared before the Committee. Of these, 6 were Scottish Government Cabinet Secretaries and Ministers.
42. Agendas and minutes of all meetings of the Committee, including details of matters considered in private, are published on the [Committee's page](#) on the Scottish Parliament's website.

