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## Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee

# Annual Report of the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee 2023-24



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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 Transport, the Cabinet Secretary for Wellbeing Economy, Net Zero and Energy, with the exception of matters relating to wellbeing economy, and just transition; and on matters relating to land reform, natural resources and peatland, Scottish Land Commission, Crown Estate Scotland, and Royal Botanic Garden within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands.



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# Committee Membership



**Convener**  
**Edward Mountain**  
Scottish Conservative  
and Unionist Party



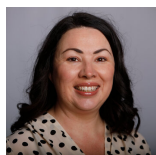
**Deputy Convener**  
**Ben Macpherson**  
Scottish National Party



**Bob Doris**  
Scottish National Party



**Jackie Dunbar**  
Scottish National Party



**Monica Lennon**  
Scottish Labour



**Douglas Lumsden**  
Scottish Conservative  
and Unionist Party



**Mark Ruskell**  
Scottish Green Party

# Overview



Reports published



SSIs considered

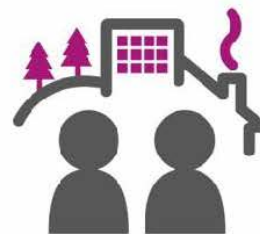


**37**

Committee meetings



Bills scrutinised



**4** Fact finding visits

# Introduction

1. This report covers the work of the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee during the Parliamentary year from 13 May 2023 to 12 May 2024. The Committee was established in June 2021.
2. The Committee's remit was amended during the Parliamentary year, following a change in Scottish Government ministerial portfolios. The current remit, as agreed by motion S6M-12477 on 13 March 2024, is to consider and report on:  
  
*matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, the Cabinet Secretary for Wellbeing Economy, Net Zero and Energy, with the exception of matters relating to wellbeing economy, and just transition; and on matters relating to land reform, natural resources and peatland, Scottish Land Commission, Crown Estate Scotland, and Royal Botanic Garden within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands.*
3. This reflects changes in government responsibilities following a ministerial reshuffle rather than substantive changes to the Committee's own remit, which remains focussed on the core issues of energy, transport, the environment and, above all, monitoring the Scottish Government's overarching strategy for achieving net zero in carbon emissions in Scotland by 2045.
4. The previous remit was to consider and report on:  
  
*matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero and Just Transition, with the exception of matters relating to just transition; on matters relating to land reform, natural resources and peatland, Scottish Land Commission; Crown Estate Scotland, and Royal Botanic Garden within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands; and on matters relating to energy within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Wellbeing Economy, Fair Work and Energy.*
5. Several membership changes occurred during the Parliamentary year:
  - In June 2023, Ben Macpherson replaced Fiona Hyslop and was then chosen as Deputy Convener;
  - In June 2023, Douglas Lumsden replaced Liam Kerr;
  - In November 2023, Bob Doris replaced Ash Regan;
  - In June 2023, Jim Fairlie replaced Bob Doris as Scottish National Party substitute member, then in March 2024, Collette Stevenson replaced Bob Doris.
  - In February 2024, Graham Simpson replaced Brian Whittle as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute member.
  - In November 2023, Maggie Chapman was appointed as the Scottish Green Party substitute member.
6. The Committee thanks its former Members for their contribution.

# Meetings

7. The Committee met 37 times during the Parliamentary year. Six meetings were held entirely in private and the other 31 meetings included items taken in public and in private.
8. Examples of business which the Committee agreed to consider in private include:
  - evidence heard earlier during meetings;
  - candidates for appointment to the role of adviser;
  - its work programme; and
  - draft reports.
9. Agendas and minutes of all meetings are published on the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee [webpage](#) at the Scottish Parliament website.



# Legislation

## Circular Economy (Scotland) Bill

10. A large proportion of the Committee's time over the last year was devoted to considering the Circular Economy (Scotland) Bill. The Bill was introduced on 13 March and was referred to the Committee for Stage 1 consideration. The Committee agreed a call for views on the Bill at its meeting on 27 June. The call was formally launched on 30 June and closed on 1 September.
11. The Committee began taking oral evidence on the Bill after the summer recess. It held a total of 10 evidence sessions from September to December, hearing from a variety of stakeholders including business representatives, public bodies, environmental NGOs, local authorities and waste companies, academics and other experts on the circular economy and the Scottish Government. The Official Reports for all of these meetings are available on the [Committee's webpage for the Bill](#).
12. In Autumn, the Committee also held three fact-finding visits. It went to see two waste and resource management companies operating in Perthshire and Edinburgh. It also visited a number of circular economy social enterprises and businesses in Leith. Additionally, the Committee held an online engagement event with small and medium sized enterprises that had been identified as illustrating circular economy business models.
13. The Committee published its [Stage 1 report on the Bill](#) on 28 February. Its overall conclusion was:
  - ” The Committee supports the general principles of the Bill although scrutiny of this partly framework Bill has been challenging. This is on the understanding that the Scottish Government will consider and respond positively to our recommendations on enhancing Parliament's ability to scrutinise and consult on key regulations brought forward under the Bill if it becomes an Act. We also want the Scottish Government to commit to ensuring the Parliament receives robust costings as early as possible for any such regulations.
14. [The Scottish Government responded](#) to the Committee's report on 14 March 2024 and the Stage 1 debate was held on 20 March 2024. After the debate the Scottish Parliament agreed by motion that the general principles of the Bill be approved.
15. Stage 2 proceedings, when the Bill is subject to amendment, began on 7 May 2024.

## Circular Economy (Scotland) Bill - visits



Source: Scottish Parliament 2024

## Land Reform (Scotland) Bill

16. The Committee has recently embarked on consideration of the Land Reform (Scotland) Bill. The Bill was introduced by the Scottish Government on 13 March and was referred to the Committee by the Parliamentary Bureau for Stage 1 scrutiny.

17. The Policy Memorandum says:

"The Bill covers four principal policy areas:

- land reform;

- a model lease designed for letting land that can be used wholly or partially for environmental purposes which will be known as a Land Management Tenancy (a letting arrangement to support individuals to undertake a range of land use activities in one lease type);
- agricultural holdings legislation; and
- small landholdings legislation.<sup>ii</sup>

18. The Committee launched a call for views on the Bill on 4 April, closing on 21 May.

## Scottish Statutory Instruments (SSIs)

19. Scottish statutory instruments are proposed new laws laid under the authority of existing primary legislation (the "parent Act"). The Parliament has a short period of time in which to consider whether they should become law. During the Parliamentary year, the Committee considered:
- 12 draft instruments subject to the affirmative procedure;
  - 13 instruments subject to the negative procedure.
20. All of the Committee's SSI reports can be read at the [Scottish Parliament website](#).
21. Additionally, 4 'laid-only' instruments (i.e. subject to no procedure) that were laid in Parliament fell under the Committee's remit.

## Deposit and Return Scheme

22. In April 2023, the then Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity wrote to the Committee on the announcement the implementation date for Scotland's deposit return scheme was to be delayed from August 2023 to March 2024. On 9 June it was announced this date would be postponed further to October 2025.
23. The Committee considered two instruments to set the new dates for implementation:
- [The Deposit and Return Scheme for Scotland Amendment Regulations 2023](#) (setting the implementation date of March 2024); and
  - [The Deposit and Return Scheme for Scotland \(Miscellaneous Amendment\) Regulations 2023 \[draft\]](#) (setting the implementation date of October 2025).

## Proposals for UK Statutory Instruments (UK SIs)

24. In some cases, the Scottish Parliament has the opportunity to consider whether it
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<sup>i</sup> Policy Memorandum, paragraph 4.

agrees with decisions by the Scottish Government to consent to provision being made via UK statutory instruments that affect devolved competence. This procedure is governed by the [Statutory Instrument Protocol](#), which was developed in response to Brexit and applies in relation to policy areas previously covered by EU Law.

25. During the Parliamentary year, the Committee received:

- Eight 'Type 1' consent notifications
- Two 'Type 2' consent notifications

## Legislative consent memorandums (LCMs)

26. Legislative Consent Memorandums (LCMs) are lodged in relation to Bills in the UK Parliament that propose to legislate on devolved matters, change the legislative competence of the Scottish Parliament, or change the executive competence of the Scottish Ministers. The Scottish Parliament must be afforded the opportunity to determine whether to consent to the proposed change or changes. The Scottish Government must lodge an LCM for any such Bill so that the Parliament can scrutinise whether consent ought to be given.

27. During the Parliamentary year, the Committee was designated lead committee for scrutiny of one LCM and two supplementary LCMs.

### Energy Bill

28. The Committee was designated lead committee for scrutiny of a [supplementary LCM](#) (lodged 21 September 2023) in relation to the [Energy Bill](#). The Bill was introduced in the House of Lords on 6 July 2022 and in the previous parliamentary year the Committee considered the original LCM and one supplementary LCM.

29. The second supplementary LCM was lodged following further relevant amendments to the Bill made at Westminster. Due to time constraints, the Committee was unable to take further evidence but [reported](#) to the Parliament on 26 September 2023.

### Automated Vehicles Bill

30. The Committee was also designated lead committee for scrutiny of an [LCM](#) (lodged 20 December 2023) and [supplementary LCM](#) (lodged 29 February 2024) on the [Automated Vehicles Bill](#). The Bill was introduced in the House of Lords on 8 November 2023. It regulates the use of automated vehicles on roads and in other public places and makes other provision in relation to vehicle automation. It implements the recommendations of a joint report by the Law Commission of England and Wales and the Scottish Law Commission that followed their 4-year review of the regulation of automated vehicles..

31. In March 2024, the Committee sought written evidence on the Bill from the Confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT), which represents Scotland's bus sector, and the Scottish Taxi Federation given that a number of the provisions requiring consent relate to, or may impact upon, passenger services that use automated vehicles. A [response](#) was received from CPT on 14 March. The

Committee also held an [evidence session](#) with the Cabinet Secretary for Transport on 19 March.

32. The Committee [reported](#) to the Parliament on 27 March.

# Inquiries and other short-term or rolling scrutiny work

## Scotland's electricity infrastructure: inhibitor or enabler of our energy ambitions?

33. In February 2023, the Committee launched an inquiry into [Scotland's electricity infrastructure: inhibitor or enabler of our energy ambitions?](#) As with the energy prices inquiry, this was intended to be a short-duration inquiry, assembling a "snapshot" of views on what electricity infrastructure will be needed to realise the ambitions set out in the Scottish Government's recently released Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan, and what needs to be done to deliver that infrastructure. The Committee's [report on the inquiry](#) was published in September 2023. The Committee's key recommendations included the need to facilitate faster Grid connections, a requirement for the planning system to better support renewable energy ambitions and for the Scottish and UK governments to be "broadly agreed on common goals and to work together."
34. The Scottish and UK governments responded to the report in November 2023. Ofgem responded in January 2024:
  - [Scottish Government response](#) - 11 November 2023
  - [UK Government response](#) - 21 November 2023
  - [Ofgem's response](#) - 16 January 2024

## Ferry services in Scotland

35. The Committee received a public petition ([PE1872](#)) saying the unreliability of ferries has resulted in losses to island economies relying on tourism and in travel restrictions for island residents, who need reliable and regular services. The Committee noted there were issues with island connections beyond those covered by the petition and agreed to undertake a comprehensive [inquiry into ferry services](#), with a focus on how ferry services should be provided in future. The Committee published the [report](#) on the inquiry in June 2023. The Committee held a [debate](#) on its report on 7 November 2023.
36. Throughout this year the Committee has also considered quarterly updates from Ferguson Marine Port Glasgow on the construction of Hulls 801 (Glen Sannox) and 802 (Glen Rosa). The Committee visited the Ferguson Marine Port Glasgow shipyard in February.

## Visit to Ferguson Marine Port Glasgow - 23 February 2024

The Committee visited FMPG Port Glasgow's shipyard in February to see progress on the construction of Hulls 801 (Glen Sannox) and 802 (Glen Rosa).



Source: Scottish Parliament 2024

37. In its report on a Modern and Sustainable Ferry Service for Scotland, the Committee made recommendations on the Small Vessel Replacement Programme and the next contract for the operation of services on the Clyde and Hebrides routes. It has pursued these issues throughout the year in correspondence and in considering the Scottish Government's Budget 2024-25.

## Appointments to the Scottish Land Commission

38. The Committee carried out consideration of appointments made to the Scottish Land Commission, a public body with responsibility for advising the Scottish

Government on matters relating to land reform. While appointments to the Commission are made by the Scottish Government, they must be approved by the Scottish Parliament. The Committee was tasked with considering the three proposed appointments and recommending to the Scottish Parliament whether they should be approved.

39. On 13 June, the Committee began its work on the most recent round of appointments by agreeing to request information from the Scottish Government about the proposed selection process and person specification. The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands [responded](#) on 11 August. The Committee [wrote](#) to the Cabinet Secretary on 12 September setting out their intended approach to scrutiny of the appointments.
40. On 29 November, the Cabinet Secretary [wrote](#) again to the Committee to share the names of three proposed candidates for the Scottish Land Commission:
  - Michael Russell (Chair)
  - Craig MacKenzie (Land Commissioner)
  - Deborah Roberts (Land Commissioner)
41. The Committee considered these proposed appointments on 12 December and agreed by division to recommend that the candidates be approved. A [report](#) was published on 19 December setting out the Committee's decision. The candidates were subsequently approved by the Scottish Parliament.
42. Since then, the Committee has exchanged letters with the Cabinet Secretary separately on issues highlighted around the confidentiality of the selection process. These letters are available on the [Committee's webpage for the Scottish Land Commission](#).

## Budget scrutiny 2024-25

43. Committees are responsible for examining the Scottish Government's yearly budget and spending plans within their remit. Each committee prepares a pre-budget report (or letter) with recommendations on how the Scottish Government should spend money in the coming year.<sup>ii</sup> This year, the Committee considered net zero, energy and transport portfolio budgets, including:
  - The Fair Fares Review and bus travel;
  - Electric vehicle charging point infrastructure;
  - Implementation of the Hydrogen Action Plan and associated capital investment, as well as the anticipated Energy and Just Transition Strategy;
  - Implementation of the conclusions of the Joint Budget Review in relation to climate change; and
  - Scotland's environmental regulators and their budgets.



44. The Committee [wrote to](#) the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Net Zero and Just Transition with its pre-budget recommendations on 16 November 2023. The Cabinet Secretary [responded](#) on 19 December 2023. Following the publication of the draft Scottish budget for 2024-25, the Committee agreed to hold evidence sessions with the Scottish Government, at meetings early in 2024, in relation to matters within the Committee's remit.

## Climate change governance

45. The Committee agreed to hold two evidence sessions on how the Scottish Government is working to address the challenge of climate change.
46. The focus was the machinery of government: the effectiveness of the structures the Scottish Government has in place to achieve this social and economic change. This includes particular elements of effective governance: political and civil service leadership, data collection and sharing, internal communications, specialist knowledge and corporate memory.
47. On 12 March 2024, the Committee held the first of its intended evidence sessions and heard from Audit Scotland on the Auditor General's report on "[How the Scottish Government is set up to deliver climate change goals](#)". The Committee will continue its consideration of these issues in the next reporting year when it hears from the Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero and Energy.

## Natural capital finance

48. Natural capital finance is investment from public or private resources to regenerate or conserve the value of the natural environment. Natural capital finance has a role in addressing the climate and nature emergencies by supporting a variety of habitats and ecosystems. But there are also concerns about the distorting effect governmental incentives to encourage natural capital investment might have on local communities and economies, and the risk of wrongly targeted incentives encouraging the wrong sort of intervention in the environment.
49. In recognition of the development of this market in Scotland, the Committee has taken a more prominent interest in natural capital finance over the last year. Firstly, the Committee posed questions to NatureScot on its memorandum of understanding signed with private equity firms for investment in woodland regeneration in Scotland in a letter [on 30 May 2023](#). The Committee received a response from the Chief Executive [on 14 June 2023](#). More recently, the Committee has explored the concept of natural capital finance with two panels of experts and practitioners at its [meeting on 26 March 2024](#). Evidence gathered so far will help to inform the Committee's future work, including scrutiny of the Land Reform (Scotland) Bill.

# Post-Brexit environmental regulation and governance (including Common Frameworks)

## Common Frameworks

50. UK Common Frameworks are agreements between the UK Government and Devolved Administrations that establish a common approach within a given policy area. They were established as a result of Brexit to manage policy divergence within areas of devolved competence. The Committee has previously undertaken scrutiny of a number of environmental Common Frameworks within its remit.

## Resources and Waste

51. The Committee has recently considered the provisional Resources and Waste Common Framework, which was first shared with the Committee by the Scottish Government in a [letter on 18 January 2023](#). Prior to commencing formal evidence taking on the Common Framework, its mechanics had already been discussed by the Committee as part of its consideration of other circular economy policies such as Scotland's deposit return scheme.
52. Noting the relevance of the Common Framework to the Circular Economy (Scotland) Bill, the Committee agreed to gather evidence on the Common Framework in parallel to its scrutiny of the Bill. As a result, questions on the Common Framework were incorporated into the Committee's call for views on the Bill and oral evidence sessions.
53. The Committee's conclusions and recommendations on the provisional Common Framework were set out in a [letter to the Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity on 21 April 2024](#).

## UK Emissions Trading Scheme

54. The UK Emissions Trading Scheme (UK ETS) is defined by the [Scottish Government](#) as "a cap-and-trade system which caps the total level of greenhouse gas emissions, creating a carbon market with a carbon price signal to incentivise decarbonisation". The UK ETS was set up to replace the UK's participation in an EU equivalent scheme following Brexit.
55. The UK ETS Common Framework sets out how the UK Government and Devolved Administration will collaborate on the operation of the new scheme. The then Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy & Transport set out details of the provisional Common Framework in a letter to the Committee [on 29 March 2023](#). In August 2023, the Committee issued a targeted call for views to solicit responses from key stakeholders. The call for views closed on 5 October 2023 and received one response. The Committee wrote to the Scottish Government [on 23 November](#) to bring this submission to its attention and agreed to take no further action.

## Review of Environmental Governance

56. The Committee is currently undertaking scrutiny of post-Brexit environmental governance arrangements in Scotland. It decided to carry out this work following the publication of a report in June 2023 by the Scottish Government on its review of the effectiveness of environmental governance in Scotland. Production of the report was a requirement of the UK Withdrawal from the European Union (Continuity) (Scotland) Act 2021 ('the Continuity Act'). In accordance with further provisions from the Continuity Act, the Scottish Government also launched a consultation on its assessment of environmental governance and is obligated to lay a statement before the Scottish Parliament responding to the consultation.
57. The Committee invited written views from a list of key stakeholders and received six responses. In light of the evidence provided, the Committee [wrote to the then Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Net Zero and Just Transition on 2 November](#) setting out questions based on concerns highlighted by stakeholders, and received [a response on 8 November](#). The Committee continued its work by hearing from a [panel of environmental experts and stakeholders on 16 January](#), followed by [Environmental Standards Scotland on 5 March](#). The Committee intends to hold an evidence session with the Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero and Energy on these issues after the statement required under the Continuity Act has been laid.

## Guiding Principles on the Environment

58. Under the Continuity Act, the Scottish Government and certain other public bodies are required to have due regard to five 'guiding principles' on the environment when making policy or operational decisions. On 31 July 2023, the then Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Net Zero and Just Transition [wrote](#) to the Committee highlighting these principles and the work the Scottish Government had undertaken to produce statutory guidance.
59. The Continuity Act requires a draft of this guidance to be laid before the Parliament for 40 days, within which time it would be able to resolve that the guidance should not be published. The draft guidance was laid on 14 August. The Committee sought views on the guiding principles from key stakeholders and used the responses to inform [a letter to the Cabinet Secretary](#) seeking information on the implementation and monitoring of the principles. The Cabinet Secretary [responded on 29 November](#). The Committee also [wrote to all Committee conveners](#) to draw the principles and [guidance](#) to their attention given that the requirement to have due regard to these principles is now in effect across all policy areas.

## Scotland's railways since public ownership

60. On 1 April 2022, the operations of ScotRail entered into public ownership. Since then, the Committee has kept a watching brief on the performance of rail services in Scotland by hearing from industry stakeholders and rail operators annually.
61. The Committee discussed recent developments on Scotland's railways with [two panels of witnesses on 16 March 2024](#). One panel was comprised of independent

watchdogs for rail services followed by a panel of representatives of rail operators. Ahead of these sessions, the Committee also sought written evidence from Scotland's four trade unions to help inform this discussion, three of which provided a written submission (all of which are contained within the Committee's [briefing paper](#) for the 16 March meeting).

## Scottish Biodiversity Strategy

62. A new Biodiversity Strategy has been created by the Scottish Government to address the nature emergency in Scotland. In 2022, the Committee considered the first iteration of the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy. When assessing it, the Committee noted the importance of the accompanying delivery plans for implementing the many ambitions set out in the Strategy. As such, it agreed at that time that it wanted to continue this strand of work in the future by scrutinising the delivery plans when they were forthcoming.
63. The Scottish Government published draft delivery plans for consultation in September 2023. The Committee agreed to gather evidence from stakeholders on these through a targeted call for views and held two evidence sessions: with [experts in marine biodiversity on 12 December 2023](#) and [experts in terrestrial biodiversity on 9 January 2024](#). The Committee then wrote to the Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity [on 22 February 2024](#) setting out its conclusions and recommendations on the draft delivery plans.

## Statutory bodies and Regulators

### Water Industry

64. The Committee has been keeping a watching brief on issues relating to Scottish Water and the water industry in Scotland throughout the Parliamentary session. This has normally taken the form of annual evidence sessions with key industry stakeholders to discuss their Annual Reports.
65. The Committee held its most recent [evidence session](#) with Scottish Water on its Annual Report and Accounts on 31 October. It has also considered issues in the water industry in its evidence sessions with [Scottish Environment Protection Agency on 3 October](#) and Scotland's water industry regulators, the [Water Industry Commissioner for Scotland and Consumer Scotland, on 7 November](#).

### Environmental Regulators

66. The Committee aims to have a session each year with environmental regulators, NatureScot and Scottish Environment Protection Agency to discuss their annual reports, finances and main priorities for the year ahead.
67. This year's [evidence session](#) with these bodies was held on 3 October.
68. The Committee also held a wide-ranging [evidence session with Environmental Standards Scotland \(ESS\) on 5 March 2024](#). This included discussion of ESS's first

annual report as a statutory body and other topical issues for ESS, as Scotland's new environmental watchdog.

## Advisers

69. During this Parliamentary year, the Committee appointed a new adviser on climate change and net zero targets after the resignation of its former adviser, Dr Dan Barlow, in October 2023 to take up a new role as an interface on climate change research between the Scottish Parliament and Scottish universities.
70. The Committee's new adviser is **Dr. Kirsten E H Jenkins**, Senior Lecturer in Energy, Environment and Society, the University of Edinburgh. <sup>iii</sup>
71. **Professor Colin Reid**, Emeritus Professor of Environmental Law, University of Dundee, continues as the Committee's adviser on environmental standards and regulation in a post-Brexit context.

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<sup>iii</sup> Dr. Kirsten Jenkins' role involves being available at times to assist other Parliamentary committees in their work on climate change and net zero scrutiny.

# Equal opportunities and Committee outreach

## People's Panel on Climate Change

72. The Committee established a People's Panel to support its post-legislative scrutiny of section 91 of the [Climate Change \(Scotland\) Act 2009](#). This provision relates to a Scottish Government obligation to create a public engagement strategy on climate change and refresh it every five years. The Scottish Government has said it will conduct a mid-term review of the strategy in 2024.
73. A People's Panel is a form of deliberative democracy where members of the public can discuss and express their views with the aim of influencing decision-making of a certain issue. The Panel was comprised of twenty three members of the public that were broadly a cross-section of Scotland's population. The Panel was tasked by the Committee with considering two questions:
  - How effective has the Scottish Government been at engaging the public on climate change and Scotland's climate change targets?; and
  - What else (if anything) could the Scottish Government do to inform and involve the public to help meet Scotland's climate change targets?
74. The Panel met over two weekends at the Scottish Parliament and held two online sessions over February and March 2024. To support their deliberations, they heard from and questioned a number of stakeholders in the field of climate change as well as representatives of sectors and groups impacted by the major changes that will be needed to achieve net zero. Panellists also met with and heard from Members of the NZET Committee. The Panel published a report [on 11 April 2024](#) presenting 18 conclusions and recommendations for the Committee on how the Scottish Government can improve public engagement on climate change.
75. The Committee held an evidence session with six members of the Peoples Panel at its meeting on 16 April 2024. It took this opportunity to explore in further detail the Panel's findings and their views on the process itself. The Committee has agreed to discuss the Panel's findings with the Scottish Government ahead of the Scottish Government's mid-term review of the public engagement strategy. It will also embed the Panel's recommendations into future work around climate change where appropriate, such as scrutiny of the Scottish Government's next Climate Change Plan, expected later this year.

## The People's Panel





## **Circular Economy (Scotland) Bill**

76. As part of its consideration of the Circular Economy (Scotland) Bill, the Committee hosted an online engagement event with small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) taking more circular approaches to products and services. It visited social enterprises operating a tool library and a refurbishment service for goods.
77. Evidence presented to the Committee during the course of its consideration of the Bill highlighted the need to consider just transition principles and the global impact of Scotland's consumption of goods and materials. The Committee recommended the proposed circular economy strategy should state how it applied just transition principles. The Committee also recommended the Scottish Government should clarify its commitment to gathering evidence on Scotland's international environmental impact and that regulations on the disposal of unsold goods should prevent the issue being exported.
78. The Committee also heard of the need for detailed impact assessments to account for equality considerations when using powers to introduce charges for single use items and we recommended a the Scottish Government "must put in place safeguards to protect vulnerable groups from any unintended consequences resulting from charges."

## **Visit to Ferguson Marine Port Glasgow**

79. During its visit to the shipyard of Ferguson Marine Port Glasgow, the Committee met with representatives of the workforce to discuss the future of the shipyard. This included how the skilled workforce were impacted by the current workload of the yard and the importance of the yard's future viability as a going concern to the Inverclyde economy.

## **Rural, remote and island communities**

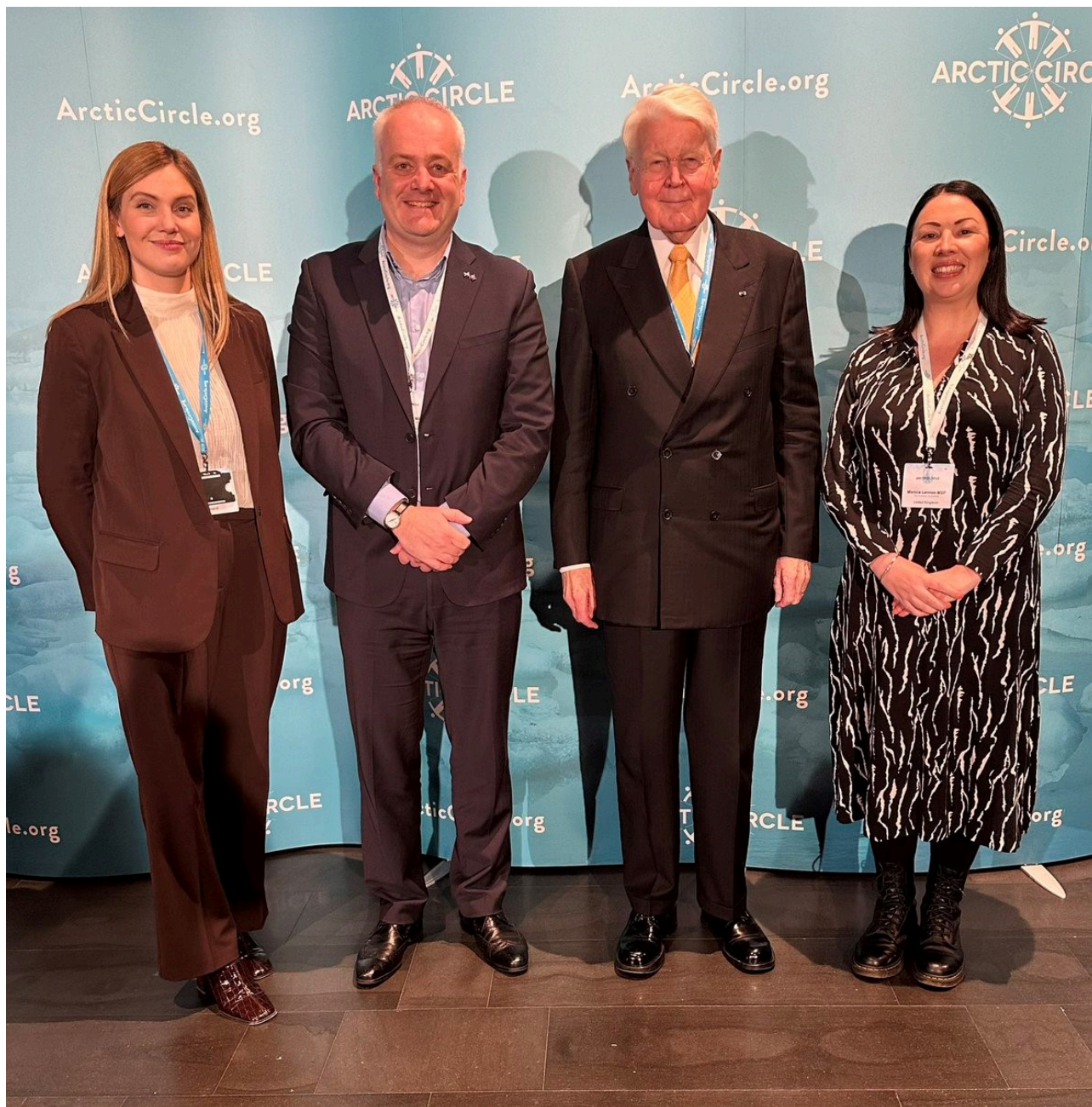
80. The Committee has considered the perspective of rural, remote and island communities in various pieces of work this year. From the impact of delays in the construction of Hulls 801 and 802, to natural capital finance and consideration of the Budget 2024-25, the Committee raised how policies in this area may impact those who live in and visit rural areas and seek to travel throughout Scotland. It heard from island local authorities on the unique challenges of waste management during consideration of the Circular Economy (Scotland) Bill. The Committee's report on electricity infrastructure noted the disproportionate impact that expanding the Grid could have on more remote and rural areas and discussed how this could be ameliorated or how local communities could be empowered to feel included in dialogue about Grid expansion. In its evidence sessions on biodiversity delivery plans and natural capital, the Committee also ensured that the impact of policies on sometimes fragile local economies and sectors was included in the discussion.

## Arctic Circle Assembly

81. Two Committee Members - Mark Ruskell and Monica Lennon - attended the Arctic Circle assembly in Reykjavik this year. This is the second time in this Parliamentary Session that the Committee has been represented at the Assembly, the world's largest forum on the Arctic and near-arctic region. This year, the delegation led a well-attended breakout session on the Challenges of meeting wind energy and biodiversity ambitions: a Parliamentary view, with contributions from Icelandic MPs. The delegation had meetings with various Ministers, Parliamentarians and policy-makers, including Conference Chair and former Icelandic President Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson. They also visited the Icelandic Parliament, the Althing, discussing the policy challenges of achieving net zero with Members of the Althing's counterpart committee, building further on links between the two committees established in this session.

### Arctic Circle Assembly

Mark Ruskell MSP and Monica Lennon MSP pictured with Conference Chair and former Icelandic President Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson.



Source: Scottish Parliament 2024

