

# Addressing the Climate Emergency

A Friends of the Earth Scotland briefing

8th June 2021



## Summary

This next five years is going to be absolutely crucial in both the local and the global fight against climate change and Scotland must take a central role with COP26 coming to Glasgow.

- Scotland's climate targets are not strong enough to deliver the Paris Agreement's target of keeping the global temperature rise below 1.5C.
- the Scottish Government's Climate Change Plan update lacks credibility and fails to set out how the targets will be met
- last month the International Energy Agency said there should be an immediate end to new fossil fuel projects
- there is already far more oil and gas extraction planned in existing fields to breach anything which could be considered a fair share of remaining fossil fuel production.
- oil and gas extraction in Scottish waters should end in a maximum of 10 years. Nearly two-third of Scots support a planned phase out.
- the right policies could create 3x more green jobs than are at risk in oil and gas.
- the workers and the communities most affected by the end of oil and gas need to be at the heart of planning a fair and rapid Just Transition.
- Carbon Capture and Storage and hydrogen from gas are expensive, inefficient and cannot provide a meaningful impact in this crucial decade of climate emergency to be considered even part of the solution.
- a Circular Economy would save Scotland 11 million tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions by 2050. The Circular Economy Bill should be one of the first that the new Parliament considers and set targets for a smaller material footprint.
- the review of incineration must be accompanied by a moratorium on building new incinerators or it will be too late.

## Overview

This next five years is going to be absolutely crucial in both the local and the global fight against climate change and Scotland must take a central role with COP26 coming to Glasgow.

## Targets and plans

Scotland has among the most ambitious climate targets in the world but they are still not strong enough to deliver the Paris Agreement's target of keeping the global temperature rise below 1.5C.

The Scottish Government's Climate Change Plan draft update was introduced to Parliament in December but lacks credibility, as evidenced by the many concerns raised by ECCLR and three other committees. The Scottish Government needs to go back to the recommendations put forward on the Climate Change Plan update by MSPs and the experts who gave evidence and consider them appropriately. The Plan needs to clearly demonstrate how it will deliver on our climate commitments and map out a clear pathway to reaching them that does not rely on immature and unreliable technologies.

Our biggest area of concern for the climate emergency is the continued production of fossil fuels from the North Sea. A new report from the International Energy Agency said there should be an immediate end to investment or licensing for new fossil fuel projects, yet the UK Government plans to license new fields next year<sup>1</sup> and Scotland's Energy Strategy states the Scottish Government's commitment to maximizing oil and gas production in the North Sea<sup>2</sup>. Stopping the search for new oil

<sup>1</sup> IEA, Net Zero by 2050, <https://www.iea.org/reports/net-zero-by-2050>

<sup>2</sup> Scottish Energy Strategy, <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-energy-strategy-future-energy-scotland-9781788515276/>

is vital but, in addition, our 'Sea Change' report<sup>3</sup> concluded that there is already far more oil and gas extraction planned in existing fields to breach anything which could be considered a fair share of remaining fossil fuel production. A poll this week found that almost two-thirds of Scots support the creation of a concrete plan to wind down the existing extraction of oil and gas in the North Sea.<sup>4</sup>

A Dutch court recently ordered Shell to drastically reduce its emissions and those of its customers<sup>5</sup> and a new case is challenging the UK Government's financial support for the oil industry.<sup>6</sup>

It is essential – for the climate, to drive a Just Transition and to give certainty on the future of our energy sector – to set a maximum of 10 years to the end of oil and gas extraction in Scottish waters.

## **Just Transition**

We welcomed the work of the Just Transition Commission and hope that many of its recommendations will be taken forward as a priority. There are opportunities to create new green jobs while reducing fuel poverty and tackling air pollution through a rapid transformation away from fossil fuels. However, the transition needs to have a timescale to drive action sufficiently urgently. This should be based on what climate science says about reducing emissions and phasing out fossil fuels. The Sea Change report modelled the potential to create three times more green jobs than those at risk in oil and gas with the right policies and investment. A report commissioned by the STUC estimated that around 150,000-350,000 green jobs could be created with the right policies.<sup>7</sup>

The workers and the communities most affected by the end of oil and gas need to be at the heart of planning a fair and rapid transition.

## **Carbon capture**

There is much hype about Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) and hydrogen from gas, but our view is that these are technologies that are too expensive and cannot provide a meaningful impact in this crucial decade of climate emergency to be considered even part of the solution. Research we commissioned from the Tyndall Centre showed that there is no operational CCS plant anywhere in the EU and the entire current global capacity can capture less than 1/1000th of current emissions, and even then most of that is re-injected to extract even more oil.<sup>8</sup> Instead Scotland should be creating jobs in renewables and energy efficiency, driving the Just Transition from high-carbon to zero-carbon jobs as quickly as possible.

## **Transport**

Transport is the largest sector creating climate change emissions. The new commitment to removing the majority of fossil fuel buses from public transport by 2023 and to a 20% car traffic reduction by 2030 are major steps in the right direction but need to be backed by strong plans to set us on the right track. The plans for buses need to make sure the necessary new buses are built in Scotland. The plans for traffic reduction need to include a broad range of carrot-and-stick measures for car use. This should include broadening the parking levy legislation to apply to out-of-town retail developments, steadily increasing active travel investment while halting new major road building and extending free bus travel until everyone has access to free bus travel.

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<sup>3</sup> Sea Change Report, May 2019, <https://foe.scot/resource/sea-change-climate-report/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.thenational.scot/news/19356234.firm-majority-scots-support-winding-north-sea-oil-gas-extraction/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-57257982>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.leighday.co.uk/latest-updates/news/2021-news/campaigners-issue-legal-challenge-to-oil-and-gas-authority-strategy/>

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.stuc.org.uk/files/Policy/STUC\\_Green\\_Jobs.pdf](http://www.stuc.org.uk/files/Policy/STUC_Green_Jobs.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Tyndall Centre report: *A Review of the Role of Fossil Fuel-Based Carbon Capture and Storage in the Energy System, January 2021*, <https://foe.scot/resource/report-carbon-capture-storage-energy-role/>

## The Circular Economy

It is estimated that a circular economy would save Scotland 11 million tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions by 2050 – a quarter of our current total.<sup>9</sup> We welcome the Scottish Government's commitment to reintroduce the Circular Economy Bill after it was halted last year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Proposals for this Bill have already been consulted on so it should be one of the first that the new Parliament considers. In order to properly capture the impact of our resource consumption, we believe the Bill must include targets to reduce our material footprint and carbon footprint, including emissions embedded in imported goods and services.

New incinerators built now will lock us into years of wasting resources by burning them instead of re-use and recycling. We welcome the commitment to review the role that incineration plays in Scotland's waste hierarchy, but this must be accompanied by a moratorium on building new incinerators or it will be too late.

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<sup>9</sup> Circular Economy, Feb 2020, <https://foe.scot/resource/circular-economy-briefing/>