

# Meeting the Climate Change Challenge

A Friends of the Earth Scotland Briefing | June 2026

## Summary

The climate crisis is threatening our way of life, and people and nature around the world. The Scottish Government has so far failed to deliver on its commitments to cut climate pollution, a more ambitious approach is urgently needed.

- Affordable buses – improving public transport reduces emissions from cars
- Warm, well insulated homes – bring down people's bills and climate pollution
- A just transition away from fossil fuels – support workers into good, green jobs
- Reject the Peterhead gas burning power station, Rosebank and Cambo
- Invest in publicly owned renewable energy
- Close the import loophole in our climate targets

## Context

The science is clear; fossil fuels are driving the climate crisis, and governments must rapidly and fairly phase out fossil fuels to prevent further human suffering and irreversible planetary harm. The devastating effects of the climate crisis are accelerating around the world. In Scotland, we are experiencing warmer summers and wetter winters with more extreme events and variable environmental conditions. Scotland's 10 warmest years on record have all occurred since 1997, increasing wildfires and difficulties for farmers. The climate crisis requires urgent action.

## Scotland's legal obligations and track record

The Scottish Government has obligations under both international and domestic law. The United Nations Paris Agreement is a legally binding international treaty which requires all countries to act to limit warming to 1.5°C, but time is running out. As a wealthy nation with historic responsibility for contributing to the climate crisis, Scotland must act faster than the global average.

The Scottish Parliament passed the Climate Change Act in 2009 with unanimous support and updated it in 2019 to strengthen targets in response to the Paris Agreement, again with cross party support. However, the **Scottish Government missed 10 out of 14 annual climate targets** and recently axed the 2030 target

because it wasn't going to be met<sup>1</sup>. Figures published last week show a **meagre 1% overall reduction in emissions in 2024** while **emissions from traffic and from the way we heat our homes increased<sup>2</sup>**.

**Scotland requires a more ambitious plan to tackle climate change while improving people's lives here in Scotland.** We believe that this is how the Scottish Government should be responding to the climate crisis and we urge MSPs to do all they can to support it.

## **1. Better buses**

**Transport is the largest source of climate pollution in Scotland every year,** primarily from private cars. If we want people to use their cars less, then we must make buses better. People need to have access to affordable, reliable, and safe bus services. Currently, buses are run in the interest of the private companies who own them, rather than the ordinary people who use them every day.

We need a **national £2 bus fare cap** for local services across Scotland and more **support for councils to bring bus services back under public control.**

## **2. Warmer homes**

**Buildings are the second largest source of climate pollution** in Scotland, driven by **heating homes with gas or oil.** At the same time, nearly 1 in 3 households in Scotland live in fuel poverty and with the price cap due to rise again, this situation for many households is getting worse.

The Scottish Government must **expand area-based energy efficiency programmes to tackle whole neighbourhoods** of poorly insulated housing – bringing down bills and climate pollution – while targeting support to those most in need first.

## **3. Just transition away from oil and gas**

As the North Sea Basin matures, job losses in oil and gas will only accelerate. Scotland is currently at risk of creating a renewable energy system that only benefits private companies, where jobs and profits are all exported overseas.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://foe.scot/press-release/climate-targets-scrapped-worst-decision-in-the-history-of-the-scottish-parliament/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/news/scottish-greenhouse-gas-statistics-2024/>

Action must be taken to **create good green jobs by investing in publicly owned domestic manufacturing and supply chain for renewables**, including upgrading ports and building out wind manufacturing. Oil and gas workers must be supported to transition into new jobs by increasing investment in the Oil and Gas Transition Training Fund, ensuring all oil and gas workers can access the fund, and introducing paid time off to train.

The Scottish Government must also ensure that profits from the energy transition are returned to the public purse by **expanding public ownership of renewables** – taking equity stakes in Scottish ports and minimum 20% equity stakes in all future ScotWind developments, funding local councils to expand municipal energy ownership, removing barriers to community ownerships, and scaling up the Scottish National Investment Bank.

#### **4. No new fossil fuel projects – in Peterhead or the North Sea**

The Scottish Government are currently **considering a planning application from SSE and Equinor to build a new gas burning power station** with carbon, capture and storage (CCS). The existing power station is already one of Scotland's biggest polluters. SSE's own environmental impact assessment admits that the project would have '**adverse and significant' climate impact**, as its emissions would count for 42% of Scotland's whole carbon budget in 2044 – **seriously risking Scotland's ability to reach net zero** and requiring other areas to cut emissions further and faster. Developers have also admitted they could run both plants simultaneously until 2040, further risking our climate goals. Approving this power station would lock Scottish households into an expensive and polluting fossil fuel-based energy system for nearly two more decades, when we should instead move to a renewable energy system that is run in the public interest.

**CCS has repeatedly been overpromised and severely underdelivered.** The plans for the power station are wholly reliant on the Acorn project for transport and storage of any captured CO<sub>2</sub>, however Acorn is at serious risk after one of its three major developers, Storegga, pulled out in December 2025. While the Scottish Government has committed vast sums of public money into the project, private companies are jumping ship.

The Scottish Government and Parliament must also oppose plans for new oil & gas drilling in the North Sea, including **Rosebank**. New fields will do nothing to lower people's bills or deliver energy security, publicly owned renewables will.

## **Publish the plans**

The Scottish Government must publish the **final Climate Change Plan** and set out a timeline to publish a new **Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan**.

The draft Climate Plan, published earlier this year, was roundly criticised for its overreliance on negative emissions technologies such as CCS, and for including the Peterhead CCS plant in its plans despite it still being at the planning stage. The final plan must address emissions from transport and homes, without CCS.

Meanwhile, **the draft Energy Strategy was published 3 years ago**.

## **Close the ‘import loophole’**

Scotland’s Climate Change Plan only covers emissions from activity in Scotland. The emissions associated with imported goods and services is ignored. Carbon-intensive industries, such as steel production, are being increasingly offshored, which has reduced Scotland’s carbon emissions on paper but not on a global scale as the root cause of our demand for these goods has not been addressed. In 2002, emissions from imports were 40% of Scotland’s carbon footprint, 20 years later, in 2022, they have grown to 53%<sup>3</sup>.

Recognising the impact of Scotland’s imports could allow Scottish climate change plans to include the return of activities such as low-carbon steel production to Scotland. The Scottish Government intends to consult on new circular economy targets in 2026 and lay draft regulations before Parliament. One option for this target is to reduce Scotland’s carbon footprint to sustainable levels, which will close this ‘import loophole’ and allow for more comprehensive climate policy making.

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<sup>3</sup> [Scotland’s Carbon Footprint 1998-2022 – gov.scot](https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotland-carbon-footprint-1998-2022/pages/2.aspx)