



Just Transition Commission

Professor Jim Skea

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Benny Higgins
Chair, Advisory Group on Economic Recovery

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Dear Benny,

Thank you for your letter inviting the Just Transition Commission to provide input to your work advising the Scottish Government on the economic recovery from COVID-19.

The scale of the impact of COVID-19 on our society means that ensuring a just transition to net-zero emissions has become even more important. As we begin to think about our recovery, there is a real opportunity to build a sustainable, inclusive and resilient economy in Scotland.

The Just Transition Commission has been asked by the Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform to consider the green recovery in its remaining work programme, and we are due to discuss this area of our work on 3rd June.

While we are not in a position to respond directly to the questions in your call for evidence at this stage, the themes identified in our interim report (summarised below) provide some indication of the likely direction of our thinking on how to bring about a just and green recovery in Scotland.

1. Planning ahead - the need for clear transition plans to be developed.

Managing the opportunities and challenges of decarbonisation will require transition plans with clear actions and objectives that are jointly created and owned by Government, industry and trade unions. All have a role to play in our net-zero transition, and plans that lay out concrete actions, like investment in infrastructure and skills development, need to be set out and owned by the appropriate parties.

Defining a vision for individual sectors in the context of a net-zero economy, along with a roadmap for how to get there, may be an important aspect of the green recovery. Private sector engagement and commitments in relation to transition planning may be one appropriate pre-condition for companies currently lobbying for Government funding or bailouts.

2. Engagement – society's expectations

The scale of change required to meet net-zero is truly transformative, necessitating changes to the way we travel, heat our homes and our diet. Experience suggests the

best way to manage such change is in partnership with people, rather than by imposing it on them.

While recognising the difficulties of carrying out engagement in the midst of a pandemic this point cannot be ignored. We would hope the Scottish Government would consider how best to involve people in decisions about how policies are implemented on the ground. For the recovery to be truly felt by ordinary people, low-carbon investments and interventions made by Government must involve them. Communities must be partners in the net-zero transition, rather than passive bystanders.

3. Bringing equity to the heart of climate change policies

We know that action taken to tackle climate change has the potential to create both winners and losers. The imperative of a just transition is that governments design policies in a way that ensures the benefits of climate change action are shared widely, while the costs do not unfairly burden those least able to pay, or whose livelihoods are directly or indirectly at risk as the economy shifts and changes.

In the context of the recovery from COVID-19, where Government resources will likely be constrained, there is a need to define who has been most affected by the pandemic and ensure the benefits of low-carbon investments being proposed will be captured by those same groups. Government must develop appropriate mechanisms to screen each policy being considered as part of a green recovery for equity considerations. In doing this, there is opportunity for the recovery to genuinely build a fairer and more inclusive Scotland.

The interim report set out the emerging themes from our work to date. In the coming months we will consider in more detail how these will link to our advice on the green recovery. I have asked the Commission's secretariat to investigate the possibility of arranging a call for us to discuss the work of our respective groups.

I hope the above information is of help, and I would like to wish you and your colleagues well as you progress your important work.

Yours sincerely,



Professor Jim Skea
Chair Just Transition Commission