

**OPENING STATEMENT – NET ZERO, ENERGY AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE
– 27 JUNE 2023**

Introduction

- Thank you Convener and Committee members for inviting me to give evidence today.
- We, as a country, have faced incredible challenges over recent years as well as the twin crises of climate change and nature loss.
- Tackling these crises is the collective fight of our lifetime, and my portfolio has a vital and urgent mandate in this.

Net Zero

- This Parliament has passed some of the world's most ambitious climate legislation and these targets are driving transformational change.
- But the hardest part of the journey lies ahead - to halve our emissions by 2030 to meet the rightly stretching target set by Parliament.

- We will set out in the draft of our next Climate Change Plan in November, Scotland's emissions reduction pathways to 2040, including the costs and benefits of our policy approach.

Transport

- As the largest source of emissions, transport will be critical to the next Plan.
- Public transport is a key driver of our net zero goals, and it needs to be attractive to users to help reduce emissions.
- Reducing fares is one mechanism - over two million people can access free bus travel through our concessionary travel schemes.
- We are also working with COSLA to finalise our 20% reduction in car kilometres route map - and our research on equitable options for car demand management will be published later this year.
- And we have introduced Low Emission Zones in our four major cities, starting with Glasgow on 1st June 2023.

Heat in Buildings

- We are also taking important steps towards decarbonising our buildings by taking the New Build Heat Standard.
- This will mean that new domestic and non-domestic buildings will be built with zero direct emissions.

Biodiversity

- We recognise the urgent need for action across the whole of government and society to tackle the twin crises of biodiversity loss and climate change.
- That is why this summer we will be setting out Scotland's biodiversity framework and plans for a Natural Environment Bill, which we will widely consult on.

Circular economy

- Our recently-introduced Circular Economy Bill will establish the legislative framework to support Scotland's transition to a zero waste and circular economy.

- The Bill is part of an ongoing programme of change designed to make it easier for households, businesses and the public sector to make sustainable choices about resource use and disposal.

Marine Protection

- It is also essential that we enhance our marine protection, to tackle these twin crises and ensure the long-term sustainability of our marine industries, which rely on a healthy environment.
- These will be addressed in our updated National Marine Plan.
- We recognise there is considerable strength of feeling on Highly Protected Marine Areas– from those who support it and those who have concerns.
- Please be assured we are listening, and I will continue to engage with coastal and island communities, as we analyse the consultation responses.

[Redacted]

Just Transition

- Finally, we must do this in a way that is just.

- A just transition means reaching our climate targets in a way that is fair, that optimises the social and economic opportunities of a greener future, and which leaves no one behind.
- Last week I published a suite of discussion papers to inform our forthcoming Just Transition Plans on the Built Environment and Construction; Transport; and Land Use and Agriculture.
- Over the summer and into autumn, we will use these materials to prompt discussion and receive challenge from a wide range of stakeholders and communities across Scotland.

Conclusion

- More needs to be done, Convenor, and we will be doing far more through the remainder of this Parliament. Thank you.

580 words; 3 ½ mins approx