



Paper 3/3 – Public Sector Climate Action in Scotland

For information

1. Purpose

1.1 This paper provides Commissioners with background briefing on public sector activity relating to climate change mitigation in Scotland.

2. Background

2.1 Scottish Government officials have drafted this paper, at the request of the secretariat. Sustainable Scotland Network assisted in identifying relevant case studies.

2.2 The paper provides an overview of the statutory duties of Scottish public bodies in relation to climate change, along with some examples of the wider social and economic impact their actions can have.

1. Glasgow and Edinburgh Council ambitions

1.1 Glasgow and Edinburgh Councils announced recently that they are aiming to become UK's first 'net-zero' cities. Their plans will be focusing on making cities greener by decarbonising heat and transport and boosting investment in the electricity grid.

2. Statutory Duties of Public Bodies in Scotland

2.1 The Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 places certain duties on public bodies. In 2015 the Scottish Government introduced an Order which requires 180 Public Bodies (NHS, educational institutions, local government, police, transport partnerships, and others) to annually report on their climate change actions.

2.2 Information is gathered and reported on public bodies strategies and policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, adapt to a changing climate and promote sustainable development. Public bodies are also encouraged to voluntarily report on their 'wider influence' on climate change and sustainable development.

2.3 The most recent reports show that climate change mitigation projects had increased by 20% among public bodies in 2016/17 from the previous year, and emissions were 4.6% lower, or 11.8% lower than 2015/16.¹

2.4 A wide-variety of projects have been implemented by public bodies to reduce their emissions. These include promoting videoconferencing and sustainable commuting practices, diversion of waste from landfill, improving insulation of estates, renewable energy projects, among many others.

2.5 The recent CCC report noted that local authorities have an important role to play in tackling climate change and are well placed to understand the needs and opportunities of their local area. Apart from reducing their own emissions, public bodies can also have a significant wider influence.

2.6 Public bodies are expected to lead by example in combating climate change and make a valuable contribution towards achieving Scotland's ambitious emission reduction targets. Some examples of their projects – and the wider economic and social impact they can have - are described below.

3. Impact of climate action by Public Bodies

Case Study 1: City of Edinburgh Council - On Street EV Charging Points

In October 2018 the City of Edinburgh Council approved the business case for on-street electric vehicle charging infrastructure across the city. This is the first scaled roll-out in a major Scottish city and will bring a range of benefits to communities and to the council. Full installation is planned for January to December 2020, with a pre-installation phase from March to December 2019. £2.2 million funding from Transport Scotland for the capital works up to 2020 has been confirmed. The business case was developed with local community groups, businesses and community councils. An impact assessment will look to understand the co-benefits resulting from the investment.

¹ https://sustainablesotlandnetwork.org/uploads/store/mediaupload/865/file/SSN_AnalysisReport.pdf

In addition to delivering economic benefits, the project is expected to deliver carbon savings of 7,715 tonnes and nitrogen dioxide savings of over 14 tonnes. A deeper assessment of the co-benefits will consider how EVs have a key role in transforming the city centre into a cleaner, greener space with improved air quality and health and wellbeing in the longer term. The business case proposed that by 2023, Edinburgh will need to install 211 charging points at a cost of £3.3 million with running costs of £0.870 million and a revenue of £1.3 million.

Case Study 2: University of Strathclyde - Action & Partnership in Carbon Reduction: Combined Heat & Power District Energy

The University of Strathclyde recently completed phase one of a £20 million Combined Heat and Power (CHP) District Energy Scheme to transform the way they supply heat and power, and dramatically reduce their carbon footprint. The project, backed by £8 million from the Scottish Government, has enabled Strathclyde to re-fit an existing energy centre and construct a district energy network to feed energy to 16 university buildings. And this is just the first phase. As part of Sustainable Glasgow – the multi-agency initiative across the city – the system also benefits the wider community. It has the ability to link Strathclyde’s campus with major energy users in the area including Glasgow City Council Chambers, a private hotel and several housing developments. Further phases may include bringing heat and power to a nearby area with a high incidence of fuel poverty.

This £20 million investment in the estate will save 4,500 tonne CO₂e per year, with financial savings of £2 million per year. It is also hoped that this project could act as a catalyst for a wider district energy scheme in Glasgow.

From the project the University has developed “The Strathclyde Commitment” in collaboration with major capital works contractors. This commits to enhancing the Gross Value Added that the university puts into the city, and for each major project to have a full socio-economic impact assessment. The District Energy Scheme, constructed by Vital Energi in partnership with Scottish Funding Council and the University was recently awarded a GO Award (Highly Commended) for delivery of social and community benefits in Glasgow.

Case Study 3: Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park Authority - Funding native woodlands

The National Park Authority Grant Scheme supported the planting of 560 native trees and 2,710 hedge plants across the National Park last year. Scotland’s native trees and woodlands are a vital tool in combating the effects of climate change and the National Park Authority estimates that the trees and hedges planted as part of the Grant Scheme will absorb 1.38 tonnes CO₂ every year. The project has helped local farmers by reducing the risk of flooding, while also making the area more attractive to visitors who walk or cycle through the area. They aim to continue to offer this funding for small scale planting within the National Park.



4. Review of the public sector climate change reporting duties

4.1 Public Bodies have acknowledged the positive impact statutory reporting duties have had on public sector climate change action. The Scottish Government is currently in the middle of collaborative review of the reporting duties and related processes to consider ways in which they could be improved to help further drive action and support public bodies enhance the effectiveness of their climate change action.