# RSE
## The Royal Society of Edinburgh
### KNOWLEDGE MADE USEFUL

# ADVICE PAPER
## March 2021 | *NO: 21–03*

## DRAFT PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY FOR CLIMATE CHANGE: A RESPONSE TO SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT

Summary

The draft Strategy appears to focus on the dissemination of proposed policies at the expense of co-developing these policies with the public and other stakeholders.

The draft Strategy is missing a firm grasp of the concept of culture change and how to achieve it. If we want individuals to take action to help minimise the impact of climate change, there must be a mechanism in place to allow them to feel a sense of reward, recognition, or personal advantage to their actions. We must also ensure individuals possess the requisite science capital.

It is important to avoid a moralistic approach to encouraging action against carbon emissions which assigns the duty to respond solely to the individual, without being mindful of the many socioeconomic factors which can preclude their participation in these mitigating actions.

Scottish Government may wish to consider introducing a national mission around climate change to situate climate considerations at the core of decision-making and, in doing so, maximise the effectiveness of mitigation and adaptation activities through cross-sectoral coherence at both a national and institutional level.

An unavoidable challenge will be ensuring that the onus for paying for a green recovery is not placed squarely on the individual.

The Strategy should seek to prioritise enabling action over communication if it is to reap the benefits of true public engagement.

The power of traditional forms of media such as television in influencing public opinion should not be underestimated, as the global success of nature programmes narrated by Sir David Attenborough and others have demonstrated. This idea of using 'ambassadors' to amplify climate change messaging could also include teachers, bus drivers, librarians, STEM ambassadors, science centres, and others with influence in their community or with considerable public reach.

Public engagement should seek to connect and boost the civic infrastructure that is already in place in order to maximise systemic impacts, rather than creating new programmes that ultimately run in parallel without ever intersecting.

There are a wealth of innovative digital tools and apps that can be used to facilitate participatory processes.

Sharing success stories and positive case studies could be one mechanism for engaging cross-sections of the local community and showcasing best practice around Scotland.

We were very supportive of the idea of community hubs. These should ideally drive local pride and pursue inter-hub knowledge exchange. In order to accelerate local action, elements of friendly competition could be introduced between hubs to spur increased commitment to their sustainability goals, supported by high-profile and public reporting on progress towards targets.

COP26 presents an opportunity to undertake new and powerful forms of quantitative and qualitative research.

Although partnership-building already takes place at the governmental level, it could also be promoted at a smaller scale via COP26 by pairing towns, institutions, schools, and other bodies across the global north and south and inviting them to share firsthand accounts, debate key climate questions, and co-develop solutions, using any one of the inventive and creative technological platforms that currently allow people to interact globally in a lively and impactful way.

We welcomed the use of national indicators and the Scottish Household Survey as monitoring tools, but suggest that these could be complemented with an outcome mapping approach.

As with any monitoring activities, as a first step, it is vital to develop a baseline so there is a starting point against which further progress can be assessed. Of equal importance is a need to define 'success' in the context of this Strategy so we can tell if it is accomplishing what it set out to achieve.

The Strategy should also consider that various other stakeholders, including regulators, companies, and investors, are constantly looking to improve their performance on the environmental, social, and governance (ESG) spectrum. Aligning all of this monitoring against a common standard such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals would create a more universal benchmark against which progress could be measured across a range of initiatives all at once.

Reporting should be a constant, accessible, and multi-level process to ensure the public remains informed of progress made to date and of key endpoints. The Strategy should also not be afraid of experimenting with different monitoring approaches.

Summary

## Introduction

1    The Royal Society of Edinburgh (RSE), Scotland's National Academy, welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Scottish Government's consultation on its new draft Public Engagement Strategy for Climate Change. The RSE agrees with the need to promote effective public engagement around climate issues and seeks to contribute to this national effort through its own engagement activities at a range of scales. This includes a wide-ranging programme of climate change activity in the run-up to COP26 and beyond, much of which includes a public engagement element. The working group preparing this paper was comprised of Fellows, Young Academy of Scotland members, and key external partners, all of whom have significant knowledge of the public engagement sphere and occupy various roles across academia, business, and the non-profit sector. We would be pleased to discuss this response further with Scottish Government should they consider this useful.

## General Points

2    Before answering the consultation questions, we believed it was fundamentally important to discuss and delineate the difference between public engagement and the 'marketing' of policy. The latter occurs when the consultation appears to focus on the dissemination of proposed policies at the expense of co-developing these policies with the public and other stakeholders. It was disappointing to see that this perspective characterised the present consultation document. While the dissemination of information is a necessary component of successful public engagement, it is only the first step on a spectrum that ultimately culminates in productive dialogue and collaboration, though this is often an iterative process. The National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement defines public engagement as '…by definition, a two-way process, involving interaction and listening, with the goal of generating mutual benefit.'[1] If such bilateral engagement is absent, the consultation becomes more of a policy promotion exercise – hoping that the public 'buys into' what is being put forward – rather than a meaningful engagement opportunity. Unfortunately, this is among the least successful ways of bringing about the deep-rooted societal shifts needed to overcome monumental global challenges such as climate change. Under this approach, people begin to feel that changes are being imposed upon them and as a result, they become more likely to resent or resist said changes rather than embrace them. On the contrary, if individuals are involved in policy development and implementation from the outset, they are more likely to feel a sense of ownership over the policy outcomes and so act to fulfil them. Addressing the climate crisis will require a new form of collective and distributed leadership where people and communities are not just led but are placed at the heart of this leadership effort.

3    In light of the above, we would have liked to see greater mention of the co-production of policies and knowledge. This is discussed in greater detail in our response to question 1.

4    In our discussion, we also remarked on the benefit of developing a baseline understanding of current public awareness of climate change science and policies in order to pitch subsequent engagement activity at the correct level and evaluate its impact.

5    Lastly, the consultation document is missing a firm grasp of the concept of culture change and how to achieve it. If we want individuals to take action to help minimise the impact of climate change, there must be a mechanism in place to allow them to feel a sense of reward, recognition, or personal advantage to their actions. As it stands, the strategy largely consists of rhetoric without a corresponding means of ensuring the messaging will resonate with people and that they will be persuaded to adopt its underlying calls to action. This is discussed in greater detail in our response to question 2.

---

1    National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (undated) What is public engagement? [online]
     Available at: https://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/about-engagement/what-public-engagement

# Response to Questions

## Consultation Questions: Our Approach

### 1. Objectives

a) What are your views on the three objectives[2] underpinning our approach to engagement on climate change?

b) Do you think that any of these objectives should be removed or changed?

c) Are there any objectives that you think should be included that are currently missing?

**Response:**

6   It might be beneficial to reword objective one to read, 'People are aware of *and understand the significance of the action* the Scottish Government is taking to address the global issue of climate change and how it relates to their lives.' This could also include a commitment to promoting a basic understanding of climate change science across the population. Unreliable data and outright fallacies about the climate crisis continue to be propagated on social and traditional media and can undermine attempts at facilitating behaviour change by engendering uncertainty. While there remains significant uncertainty regarding how climate change might manifest across the globe, this is very different from uncertainty about whether or not it is actually taking place and action should be taken to ensure that people do not conflate these two concepts.[3] Similarly, while some changes in climate can be attributed to natural phenomena, anthropogenic climate change far outstrips this both in amount and in the rate of change. These are complex issues which also requires building individuals' science capital,[4] which is discussed in further detail in response to question 4.

7   Objective one should be renamed from, 'Communicating climate change policy' to something containing the world 'dialogue', as this inherently implies that the public will be active participants in these conversations rather than just the recipients of pre-determined information. Dialogue also recognises that people themselves have information, knowledge, and know-how that is essential in tackling societal problems.[5]

8   Objective two, which references the role of people in shaping policies, could be broadened to include support for the co-creation of knowledge through programmes such as citizen science. Not only would this help to build the scientific evidence base around which climate policy decisions are formed as well as help to devise more effective site-specific mitigation strategies, it could inspire individuals to remain engaged in national conversations around climate change and to follow up their initial involvement with further action.

9   The third objective ('Taking action on climate change is normalised and encouraged in communities and places across Scotland') should be modified to take account of the fact that people's capacity to modify their behaviour varies considerably. Even if individuals have a willingness to practise more environmentally friendly behaviours, they may very well lack the means to take action, become more informed about the issues, or to prioritise said actions above more immediate concerns such as financial or time constraints. As a result, this normalisation of behaviour must be actively facilitated and supported to allow individuals to actually engage in the behaviours government are asking them to undertake.

---

2   As listed in the consultation document, the three strategic objectives are: communicating climate change policy (people are aware of the action that Scottish Government is taking to address climate change and how it relates to their lives); enabling participation in policy design (people actively participate in shaping fair and inclusive policies that encourage adaptation to and mitigation of climate change); and encouraging action (taking action on climate change is normalised and encouraged in communities and places across Scotland).

3   One example of a successful national approach to combating disinformation and misinformation has been Taiwan's pro-information campaign in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Dubbed a 'humour over rumour' strategy, the approach made use of viral videos, memes, and other digital tools to impart factual information to residents in a light-hearted, memorable, and effective way. BBC *Click* (4 June 2020) How Taiwan Tackled the Coronavirus [online] Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=BZnK61kJka4

4   Science capital covers science-related qualifications, interest, literacy, and social contacts that reinforce one another to culminate in a personal 'ownership' and recognition of science and how it influences the individual and those around them. It is a primary predictor of how individuals will engage with science and whether they will shift their practices in response to changes in their scientific understanding. In this way, increased science capital empowers individuals to notice and make sense of climate change science and apply it to their own lives in ways that result in meaningful behaviour change.

5   Escobar, O. (2011) Public dialogue and deliberation: A communication perspective for public engagement practitioners. UK Beacons for Public Engagement, Edinburgh. [online] Available at: http://www.beltanenetwork.org/resources/beltane-publications/

**10** We must also be careful not to presume that the public will be innately supportive of any new climate change technologies simply because they are designed with societal benefits in mind. Such technologies are usually developed in relative isolation in academic and/or industrial settings and often do not take account of public attitudes and opinions until after the fact, on the basis that such attitudes and opinions could only be positive. However, even the most well-intentioned interventions can be met with public resistance if people feel they have had no say in the matter.

**11** It is important to avoid a moralistic approach to encouraging action against carbon emissions which assigns the duty to respond solely to the individual, without being mindful of the many socioeconomic factors which can preclude their participation in these mitigating actions. On this point, the final report of the Just Transition Commission provides key guidance on how policies aimed at climate change can be developed and implemented in a socially equitable way.

**12** Similarly, it was remarked that the third objective could be applied beyond the level of the individual to encompass the many institutions that individuals work for and interact with, from households through to governments, private sector companies, and entire communities. This would more evenly and effectively allocate responsibility for climate action so it is once again not just the individual who is expected to enact change. Indeed, the COVID-19 pandemic has illustrated the power of collective action and this could be capitalised upon in the context of climate change policy as well.

**13** While overarching objectives are useful in establishing the theoretical framework that will shape actions in practice, there has been some debate at both the European and Scottish levels about the value of missions in aligning disparate policy areas and investments towards a common outcome. Scottish Government may wish to consider introducing a national mission around climate change to situate climate considerations at the core of decision-making and, in doing so, maximise the effectiveness of mitigation and adaptation activities through cross-sectoral coherence at both a national and institutional level.

## 2. Principles

a) What are your views on our seven principles[6] for public engagement set out in Box 1?

b) Do you think that any of these principles should be removed or changed?

c) Are there any principles of good public engagement on climate change that you think are missing?

### Response:

**14** We broadly agreed with the principles as presented in the consultation document. However, it was felt that an understanding of the drivers of behaviour change was missing. In order for individuals to feel motivated to take action against climate change, they need to see how they stand to benefit from such actions, whether that be a sense of personal satisfaction or some form of material gain. It is not enough for governments to describe climate change as a moral imperative without coupling this rhetoric with effective positive feedback loops that allow people to appreciate the difference they are making to both the planet and themselves. Otherwise, it is extremely easy for them to become disheartened and demotivated to the point where lasting culture change becomes very difficult to effect. Along the same lines, there should be a principle that relates to celebrating successes and keeping the public informed of progress to date to ensure that the momentum of collective action is sustained.

---

**6** As listed in the consultation document, the seven principles are as follows: an approach that is inclusive and accessible to all; an approach that actively puts people first and places people at the heart of all that Scottish Government does with respect to climate change; a commitment to listening to and engaging with experts to ensure an evidence-based approach; an approach in which the elements of climate justice and a just transition are embedded; the encouragement of a social dialogue on climate change; a positive approach that outlines a vision for climate action that promotes the many co-benefits; and an open and transparent approach that ensures people can see and understand the actions being taken.

**15** The group welcomed the underlying point that the boundaries that define traditional policy decision-making must be challenged. This will grow increasingly important as the younger generations, who have been raised in the shadow of the climate crisis, and are becoming increasingly used to mobilising in significant numbers to demand change, come of age and expect institutions to keep pace with them.

**16** It was felt that the first principle of positivity, while important, should be balanced with an appropriate reference to realism. Some of the lifestyle changes we are asking individuals to make (such as reducing air travel) will require substantial changes to behaviours and habits. This should be acknowledged from the outset so that individuals believe their actions are being valued and appreciated.

**17** We were somewhat wary of the 'Putting People First' principle as it could inadvertently signal that environmental considerations are secondary to human interests. Climate change is impacting on the whole of the natural ecosystem of which humanity is but a part. Conveying the complexity and interconnectivity of climate change with environmental aspects is important. It was suggested that this principle could be modified to 'People-led' in recognition of the central role that humans must play in addressing climate change and the largely human origins of the climate crisis itself.

**18** There were some concerns raised in the framing of the 'Just' principle, which appears to suggest that people have been reluctant to become involved in climate action when in reality, they have not been given an opportunity to contribute.

**19** It was considered that the principles are missing a reference to the gravity of the current climate crisis. Indeed, in 2019, Scotland became the first government in the world to declare a climate emergency[7] in recognition of the speed and scale of its potential devastation, and so it seems appropriate that this sense of urgency be reflected in the present document to ensure people continue to be reminded of the need for immediate action.

### 3. Other comments

    a) Do you have any other comments on our overall approach?

**Response:**

**20** We do not have any further comments.

## Consultation Questions: Green Recovery

### 4. What are your views on the opportunities and challenges for public engagement in the Green Recovery?

**Response:**

**21** Although the RSE was supportive of the aspirations mentioned in the document, it observed there was insufficient detail regarding how these would be transformed into a workable plan of action. The wellbeing approach was welcomed as it emphasises the personal gain to be derived from behaviour change and is a logical continuation to the national response to COVID-19. It is also in line with the recent final report of the Social Renewal Advisory Board.[8] However, this alone is not enough to see Scotland through to wider, lasting culture change. It must be supported by further culture change drivers such as increasing science capital among the general population. Science capital is not uniformly distributed across different groups within society, which affects how these groups personally relate to climate change. University College London has undertaken a range of significant and compelling work in the area of science capital and its connection to other issues such as social justice.[9]

**7** https://climateemergencydeclaration.org/scotland-worlds-first-government-to-declare-a-climate-emergency/

**8** Social Renewal Advisory Board (2021) If Not Now, When?: The Social Renewal Advisory Board Report [online]
Available at: https://www.gov.scot/publications/not-now-social-renewal-advisory-board-report-january-2021/pages/2/

**9** UCL Institute of Education (undated) STEM Participation & Social Justice Research [online]
Available at: https://www.ucl.ac.uk/ioe/departments-and-centres/departments/education-practice-and-society/stem-participation-social-justice-research

22  An unavoidable challenge will be ensuring that the onus for paying for a green recovery is not placed squarely on the individual. Combining pandemic recovery and climate change mitigation is an ambitious feat and will require equally innovative funding and support schemes operating on a national level if it is to succeed. Citizens – many of whom are still reeling from pandemic-induced job losses or reductions in income – must be protected from incurring further financial burdens, this time in the name of national progress towards climate targets. For example, it would be unreasonable to expect most consumers to opt for more sustainable heating or transport options when these alternatives continue to command hefty green premiums. A green recovery is therefore contingent on individuals being able to afford the decisions that government will be asking them to make. These decisions should also be easy to make, or else people will likely be put off by the excessive bureaucracy they will need to navigate. This is most relevant to the planning sector, which currently places strict controls on the modification of listed and other historic buildings and so can dissuade homeowners and others from attempting to retrofit their properties with modern energy efficiency measures.

23  Relevant to the topic of a green recovery, we welcomed the final report of the Just Transition Commission and hope to engage further with its findings. The Commission will need to garner sufficient support if its recommendations are to be implemented; to this end, it should look to make best use of the existing organisational and governance landscape in Scotland in the first instance. As it currently stands, Scotland's civic infrastructure is characterised by a high degree of fragmentation, with a tendency to introduce new initiatives at the expense of considering how existing projects might be harmonised to achieve stronger outcomes. This is discussed further in the section on Enabling Participation in Policy Design.

## *Consultation Questions: Communicating Climate Change Policy*

5.  **What are your views on our approach to communicating climate change policy?**

6.  **Are you aware of any practical examples or case studies of good practice for communicating on climate change that could be useful for informing our approach?**

**Response:**

24  The Strategy should seek to prioritise enabling action over communication if it is to reap the benefits of true public engagement. The advantages of enhanced citizen participation are twofold in that citizens contribute to the expansion of the collective knowledge base and to the building of policies that will best serve them, while concurrently improving their understanding of the issues, both of which increase the likelihood they will remain invested in the outcomes. The most effective communication strategies are therefore coupled with calls to action, such as citizen science programmes. For example, the RSE's Young Academy of Scotland has been identifying data sets that could be created by school communities. Some databases in Scotland already rely on the regular input of public data whilst simultaneously educating users about the issues, such as SEPA's Floodline reporting service.[10] Floodline prioritised giving people a stake in the process and an opportunity to share experiences and feed in ideas for change, resulting in successful delivery partnerships and widespread adoption of the schemes.

25  The power of traditional forms of media such as television in influencing public opinion should not be underestimated, as the global success of nature programmes narrated by Sir David Attenborough and others have demonstrated. This idea of using 'ambassadors' to amplify climate change messaging could also include teachers, bus drivers, librarians, STEM ambassadors, and others with influence in their community or with considerable public reach. For example, research has shown that increasing teachers' science capital and partnering with them as a conduit for the transmission of science capital to their students is often more effective than targeting learners directly. Importantly, these ambassadors should hail from a diverse set of backgrounds in order to increase their reach and engender trust across Scotland's varied communities.

10  SEPA (undated) Floodline [online] Available at: https://www.floodlinescotland.org.uk/

26 Although language around legislation and policy can often be alienating to the public, it is nevertheless important to assist people in understanding how these instruments work in their favour and which legislative powers are devolved to Scotland. This will provide them with the necessary foundation on which they can build their understanding of climate policy and the levers Scotland has at its disposal to meet national targets and improve life for its citizens.

27 Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence readily ought to lend itself to the teaching of climate issues, particularly through its emphasis on interdisciplinary learning (IDL). Unfortunately, the implementation of IDL across Scotland's schools has been patchy to date and it still does not have sufficient status within the current structure, delivery, and priorities of Curriculum for Excellence, especially at the secondary school level. The RSE has done considerable work in discussing the value and benefits of IDL and identifying the actions and conditions necessary to support its delivery.[11]

28 The Scottish Science Centre Network and the regional network of science festivals are another notable resource whose expertise at engaging a diverse array of communities could be harnessed to increase the reach of climate change messaging. The centres alone have a combined annual reach of 650,000 total engagements and also operate targeted outreach aimed at remote and rural areas and other underserved audiences. Many of the best outreach activities are hinged on established relationships with local communities so these existing channels become an ideal base from which to undertake further engagement in a way that is geographically spread, efficient, and ultimately more successful. This benefit could be heightened by introducing new funding models that are collaborative rather than competitive.

29 Lastly, Scottish Government should look to ensure that new national climate change initiatives are given a high profile and communicated to the public via major announcements and other effective means.

## Consultation Questions: Enabling Participation in Policy Design

7. **What are your views on our approach to enabling participation in policy design?**

8. **Are you aware of any practical examples or case studies of good practice for enabling participation in decision-making that could be useful for informing our approach?**

**Response:**

30 Public engagement should seek to connect and boost the civic infrastructure that is already in place in order to maximise systemic impacts, rather than creating new programmes that ultimately run in parallel without ever intersecting. For example, members of the Scottish Citizens' Assembly could be further empowered as community 'ambassadors' and encouraged to take their findings back to their communities who could then set up local programmes to build upon the discourse that the Assembly initiated. There is also an opportunity for the Local Governance Review to consider how public engagement might more effectively be embedded into the operations of local authorities and cross-sector partnerships (e.g. Community Planning Partnerships, Third Sector Interfaces, etc.). There is now a precedent for increased public participation at the local council level as participatory budgeting processes become mainstreamed across all local authorities in Scotland. The new collaborations and spaces for action that are enabled by such participatory budgeting could be given a stronger environmental focus. Scottish Government could also look to increase the engagement capacity of local community anchor organisations (for example, community development trusts) to help engage citizenry and spread messaging through established and trusted networks.

---

11  Royal Society of Edinburgh (2020) Advice Paper No. 20-02: Embedding Interdisciplinary Learning in Scottish Schools [online] Available at: https://www.rse.org.uk/interdisciplinary-learning-in-schools/

**31** As mentioned, the concept of science capital can help to understand how to promote increased engagement in the design of public policy.[12] Additional tools include a range of flexible, online platforms that can be used synchronously or asynchronously to enable productive dialogue to take place, ranging from traditional examples such as Facebook to more innovative systems such as EngagementHQ by Bang The Table[13] and Dialogue by Delib,[14] which has been used by the Scottish Climate Assembly. Further open-source options include CONSUL [15] (which is already in use across Scotland to facilitate participatory budgeting) and Decidim.[16]

## Consultation Questions: Encouraging Action

**9. What are your views on our approach to encouraging action?**

**10. Are you aware of any practical examples or case studies of good practice for encouraging climate change action that could be useful for informing our approach?**

**Response:**

**32** A considerable level of public engagement with children[17] already takes place through schools, given they are a simple but effective way of reaching this particular audience. However, it is important to remember that public engagement strategies must extend beyond such quick wins and strive to engage with as many different segments of society as possible. This is admittedly easier said than done in the absence of organisational structures that function similarly to schools but target adults. However, Scotland will continue to face challenges that are similar in magnitude to climate change and COVID-19 in future and so will continue to require society-level responses. We should therefore prioritise the development of structures that are tailored to engaging with various demographics. Again, this could link back to the idea of a national mission, which would influence the organisation and functioning of societal institutions towards a fundamental objective such as tackling climate change.

**33** We noted the mention of nature-based solutions.[18] While this term has received considerable attention in recent years as a promising means of tackling the climate crisis, it is by no means a panacea and so it is important to temper people's expectations regarding what can feasibly be achieved through the application of nature-based solutions. Glasgow City Council's Open Space Strategy[19] serves as a good example of public participation in the development of policies around nature-based adaptation and resilience, helping to ensure those involved understand the opportunities – and limitations – associated with this mitigation and adaptation approach.

**34** Sharing success stories and positive case studies could be one mechanism for engaging cross-sections of the local community and showcasing best practice around Scotland. An example of one such local community initiative is the Climate Action East Linton group.[20] What began as a group of East Linton residents meeting informally to discuss climate change and other issues has grown into an organised local movement overseeing several climate-related projects and activities, one of which is funded through the Climate Challenge Fund. This includes – among other things – a tool library, preparations for a Repair Café, and participation in Carbon Conversations, including the training of local people to help facilitate these.

**12** Association for Science Education (2018) What is science capital? And what does it look like in the classroom? [online] Available at: https://www.ase.org.uk/news/what-science-capital-and-what-does-it-look-in-classroom

**13** Bang The Table (undated) EngagementHQ Platform [online] Available at: https://www.bangthetable.com/engagementhq-community-software

**14** Delib (undated) Dialogue: Overview [online] Available at: https://www.delib.net/dialogue

**15** CONSUL (undated) Homepage [online] Available at: https://consulproject.org/en/

**16** Decidim (undated) Homepage [online] Available at: https://decidim.org/

**17** A best practice example would be the work The Children's Parliament has done in engaging with children around climate change, feeding the results back to Scotland's Climate Assembly. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vQ8uhnyJP3Q

**18** NatureScot defines nature-based solutions as 'the use of nature and natural environments to help tackle socio-environmental challenges, providing benefits to people and nature.' https://www.nature.scot/climate-change/nature-based-solutions

**19** Glasgow City Council (2020) Glasgow's Open Space Strategy [online] Available at: https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=47093&p=0

**20** Climate Action East Linton (undated) About us [online] Available at: https://www.cael.community/about

35 The interfaith group Eco-congregation Scotland is another example of small, independent groups sharing best practice and developing new ideas for implementing carbon-saving schemes throughout Scotland and the whole of the UK through contacts with Eco-congregations across all four nations.[21]

36 We were very supportive of the idea of community hubs. These should ideally drive local pride and pursue inter-hub knowledge exchange. In order to accelerate local action, elements of friendly competition could be introduced between hubs to spur increased commitment to their sustainability goals, supported by high-profile and public reporting on progress towards targets. For example, hubs could redeem rewards for achieving the greatest food waste reductions or the lowest carbon mileage. This 'gamification' would help to translate the often abstract concepts contained within climate policy into tangible and even exciting goals for citizens to work towards, helping to reinforce the message but also promoting a sense of community and heightened personal and collective responsibility through increased accountability.

## Consultation Questions: COP26

11. **How do you think COP26 can help deliver a positive legacy for people of Scotland and climate action?**

12. **How can we work with stakeholders and actors across Scotland to deliver our "people" theme for COP26?**

13. **Are there other initiatives that the Scottish Government should consider joining or supporting ahead of COP26?**

**Response:**

37 COP26 presents an opportunity to undertake new and powerful forms of quantitative and qualitative research. For example, a virtual, searchable map demonstrating the network of existing climate change activity that is currently taking place in Scotland could be developed and made available to citizens and formal delegates alike. The map could cover everything from communities to work by non-profit entities, academia, science centres, government, councils, and others. It could also highlight where funding opportunities may be available. Not only would such a map be a useful reference tool, it would allow individuals to visualise how they and their communities are integrated into the bigger picture of national climate change action and motivate them to build upon and consolidate these linkages. This can be a key portal for people to join existing activities and network according to their interests, priorities, and location, which in turn can generate new connections and initiatives.

38 From a political negotiation standpoint, one of the key discussions to be had at COP26 will be how continued decarbonisation will be financed. In moving towards net-zero, Scotland – and indeed the world – must be prepared to face huge costs and economic and social trade-offs. While the notion of a 'just transition' towards a low-carbon future has gained traction in recent years, there is still much to be determined in ensuring that society's most vulnerable and disadvantaged individuals are not unduly burdened with the costs of decarbonisation. Until that question is satisfactorily resolved, those paying the price are not likely to be those who have incurred its cost. The RSE submitted evidence to the Just Transition Commission's call for evidence on its interim report and we highlight that advice paper here as a useful summation of our key positions on the mechanisms and principles of a successful just transition.[22]

39 Given that COP26 is a gathering of over 200 countries, addressing a global issue, Scotland could consider how best to take advantage of this multi-national presence to help its people forge new links with fellow citizens from around the globe. Although this partnership-building already takes place at the governmental level, it could also be promoted at a smaller scale by pairing towns, institutions, schools, and other bodies across the global north and south and inviting them to share firsthand accounts, debate key climate questions, and co-develop solutions, using any one of the inventive and creative technological platforms that currently allow people to interact globally in a lively and impactful way.

21 Eco-congregation Scotland (undated) Homepage [online] Available at: https://www.ecocongregationscotland.org/
22 Royal Society of Edinburgh (2020) Advice Paper No. 20-08: Just Transition Commission Interim Report: A Response to Scottish Government [online] Available at: https://www.rse.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Just-Transition-Commission-Final-Published-Version.pdf

## *Consultation Questions: Monitoring and Evaluation*

**14. What are your views on how our progress towards our objectives could be most effectively monitored and evaluated?**

**15. How regularly – and in what format – should we report on progress on the strategy?**

**Response:**

**40** We welcomed the use of national indicators and the Scottish Household Survey as monitoring tools, but suggest that these could be complemented with an outcome mapping approach. While this method is customarily used in the context of international development, it is more broadly applicable in that it considers the respective contributions of various factors to a given outcome rather than looking at a single action and outcome in isolation.

**41** As with any monitoring activities, as a first step, it is vital to develop a baseline so there is a starting point against which further progress can be assessed. Of equal importance is a need to define 'success' in the context of this Strategy so we can tell if it is accomplishing what it set out to achieve.

**42** The Strategy should also consider that various other stakeholders, including regulators, companies, and investors, are constantly looking to improve their performance on the environmental, social, and governance (ESG) spectrum. Aligning all of this monitoring against a common standard such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals would create a more universal benchmark against which progress could be measured across a range of initiatives all at once. This is particularly important for quantitative markers of social impact, the assessment of which currently lags behind environmental reporting. Without a robust evaluation scheme, organisations run the risk of missing or ignoring targets for achieving social change.

**43** The Strategy should also not be afraid of experimenting with different approaches. In particular, there could be much to be gained from experimentation around system-led versus individual-led change.

**44** Reporting should be a constant, accessible, and multi-level process to ensure the public remains informed of progress made to date and of key endpoints. One idea might be an infographic that is prominently displayed in public and online places, and through an integrated online app, to illustrate progress towards targets and potentially link up to similar graphics on a local, community, or individual scale so that progress can be tracked at various levels of resolution. Such feedback loops are critical in ensuring that people remain aware of the key messages and recognise that their actions are inextricably linked to impacts on a larger scale. Otherwise, they could lose sight of why they are making these changes in the first place.

## Additional Information

Any enquiries about this advice paper should be addressed to Daria Tuhtar (dtuhtar@therse.org.uk).

Responses are published on the RSE website (https://www.rse.org.uk/)

The Royal Society of Edinburgh, Scotland's National Academy, is Scottish Charity No. SC000470

*Advice Paper (Royal Society of Edinburgh) ISSN 2024-2694*