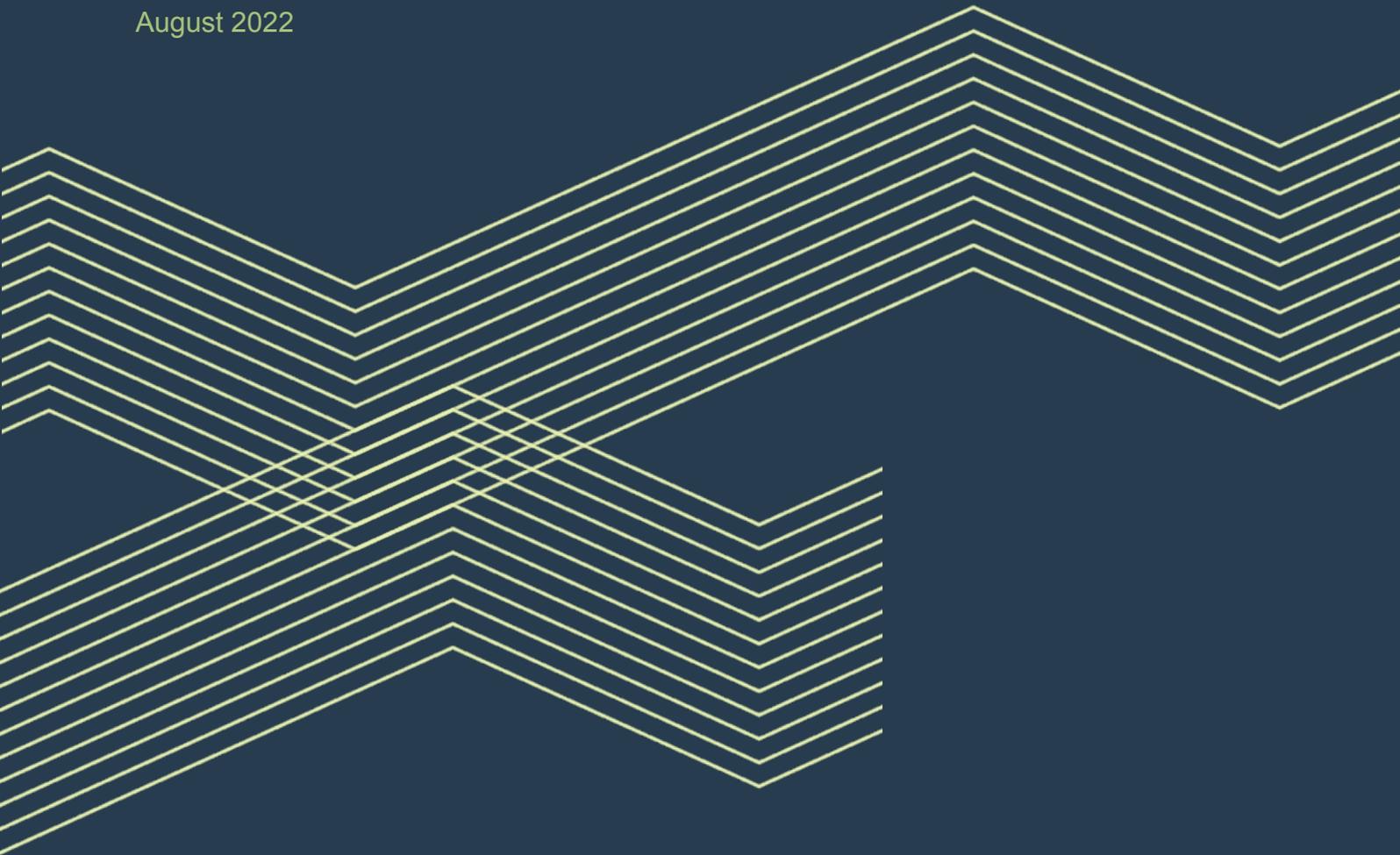


Unlocking Scotland's response to the climate emergency:

4 immediate actions to fast-track
delivery for the Scottish Government

Summary

August 2022





Introduction

With an energy crisis and sky-rocketing cost of living, now is the time to double down on tackling the climate emergency and realise the many benefits of the transition. Further delay will only lead to higher costs in the future, which will hit harder on those with lower incomes.

The Climate Emergency Response Group's (CERG) report sets out practical, immediate actions that can and must be taken now to avert the worst impacts of the climate crisis. There has been some progress from the Scottish Government, but Scotland must do more, and faster. CERG has identified four areas which must be 'unlocked' to make progress across the board:

- Require a 'Net Zero Test' for policy and investment decisions
- Unite local and national governments in the climate emergency response
- Accelerate the shift from cars to active, public, and shared transport in Scotland's cities
- Invest in advice and skills for farmers and crofters to support a just transition

These proposals should be taken forward in the Programme for Government 2022 because they will cut emissions, and they will reduce energy demand, provide long-term energy security, and help with the cost-of-living crisis by reducing energy bills and upskilling and training people for low carbon jobs, now and in the future.

The Programme for Government 2021 included a welcome set of climate commitments linked to delivering a just transition. With the energy price cap currently predicted to rise by as much as 65% in October against April's price, the Programme for Government in 2022 must supercharge the transition to a net-zero economy. Action in 2022-2023 will be the real test of this administration and its ability to flex its powers and work with business, citizens and the third sector to tackle both the climate and cost of living crises.

The Climate Emergency Response Group

The Climate Emergency Response Group (CERG) is a collection of like-minded leaders spanning Scotland's private, public and third sectors, delivery organisations and membership bodies. The group aims to inform and influence the Scottish Government's response to the climate emergency by producing reports with practical solutions that can be implemented now.

CERG also produces annual progress assessments, holding the Scottish Government to account on their commitments. The group's 2021 assessment concluded that while government has made good progress against its recommendations, there is only limited evidence of the emergency thinking called for – i.e. rapid targeted action, unlocking barriers to delivery and a shift from sectoral to systemic solutions.

Summary of the 4 immediate actions

All four proposals set out immediate actions for the next 12 months (2022-2023) with indications of further actions that will be required in the medium term. CERG chose just four priorities because they are critical to enabling delivery of existing commitments, and to allow more time for stakeholder engagement in developing the proposals, as well as following up our previous recommendations.

1 **Require a Net Zero Test for policy and investment decisions**

What

Develop a mandatory Net Zero 'Test' for public sector decisions on policy, planning, and investment. The 'test' would involve a layered approach from screening to assessment as required by the policy or project. The Net Zero Test would:

- Apply to individual projects as well as at an overarching programme level - aimed at ensuring compatibility with Scotland's 2030 and 2045 climate change targets.
- Inform policy and investment in the future as well as existing policy and infrastructure plans so they can be amended as required to align with net zero goals.

Why

Decisions are being made every day by the public sector which could support our response to the climate emergency or at worst lock us into a high carbon pathway. Without a coherent approach it is unclear how alignment of policy and spend decisions with Scotland's net zero goals will be ensured. The current patchwork approach also risks significant waste of public sector resources with multiple agencies and departments developing their own approaches which cannot be compared.

The Net Zero Test will facilitate coordination and scrutiny across government and provide solid evidence of the 'value for money' of climate policies through time-saving decisions and avoiding costs of stranded assets or retrofit later.

Immediate actions for the 2022 Programme for Government

- Commit to a mandatory Net Zero Test for policy and public spending with implementation from 2023
- Provide guidance, training, and capacity building, including a central source of expertise.
- Build on work for the Joint Budget Review, carbon assessment of the City and Growth Deals, and others – there is no need for 'new' tools.
- Support public sector policy or spending decisions only when aligned to net-zero.

“Decisions are being made every day by the public sector which could support our response to the climate emergency...”

2 Unite local and central government to tackle the climate emergency

What

Negotiate and agree a joint net-zero delivery framework between national and local government identifying roles, necessary funding, and resources, including practical solutions to overcome barriers to delivery and make the most of existing potential.

Why

30% of emissions reduction depends on local government action; it is where delivery happens, decisions are made, and where people live, work, and move. It is also where many of the opportunities for a just transition lie – new jobs, economic innovation, and the creation of healthy, liveable places.

The lack of local authority resources – funding, expertise and capacity – means Scotland’s ability to meet its targets and deliver on national flagship policies is at risk, e.g. decarbonising heat, renewable energy, 20-minute neighbourhoods, 20% reduction in car kms. Scotland is also not well-placed to develop large-scale business cases for net zero programmes in partnership with the private sector, without experienced regional and local authority teams focused on this work.

Immediate actions for the 2022 Programme for Government

- Develop a specific framework on delivery of net zero programmes as part of plans to ‘reset’ the relationship between national and local government in a ‘New Deal’ for Local Government.
- Undertake a rapid gap and opportunities analysis. Identify how to fill the gaps through aligning limited public sector resources to get the job done through shared hubs of expertise, redeployments, reprioritisation, closer collaboration with agencies and FHE sector, as well as additional funding.



3 Accelerate the shift from cars to active, public, and shared transport in Scotland's cities

What

Work closely with local authorities and their regional partners to overcome funding, procedural and governance barriers to enable them to accelerate delivery on the ground. Government investment, incentives and regulation need to align to enable the rapid delivery of locally agreed plans where place-making, active travel, public transport, shared mobility, and actions to discourage private car use come together to deliver emissions reduction with multiple benefits for the local economy, health, and society.

Why

Achieving Scotland's ambitions for emissions reduction and a reduction in car mileage requires the transformation of places and transport systems so that walking, cycling, and public transport become more convenient, affordable, and cost-effective than the private car. To coordinate services, maximise the benefits and avoid competition for road-space, provisions for active travel, public transport and shared mobility need to be delivered in an integrated way. A gap exists between Scotland's ambitious sustainable travel hierarchy, transport policy targets and plans and the reality in Scotland's cities, where the car is still king. Scotland's seven cities are best placed to be first movers to reduce car dependence by investing in infrastructure and introducing measures which can deliver widespread benefits for the local economy, public health, social inclusion, and the environment.

Immediate actions for the 2022 Programme for Government

- Shift to multi-year, non-competitive funding agreements with local authorities from 2023.
- Speed up consenting for new infrastructure and strengthen enforcement of priority measures by the end of 2022.
- Support more rapid decarbonisation of the bus sector in 2023.
- Engage with citizens to agree practical, workable solutions (national and local) from 2023.
- Stronger leadership and regional action on car demand management.

“Government investment, incentives and regulation need to align to enable the rapid delivery of locally agreed plans...”

4 Invest in advice and skills for a just transition for farmers and crofters

What

Publish comprehensive plans in 2023 to realign and upscale the provision of accessible advice and skills development to farmers and crofters to a £20million /year service. From 2024, all farmers and crofters should receive the advice they need to transition to climate and nature friendly farming, respond to investment opportunities and to deliver sustainable economic and environmental outcomes.

Why

Early action on skills and advice is essential to speed up the agricultural transition over the coming months and years, whilst helping to ensure this is a fair and managed process for farmers and crofters (a Just Transition).

Immediate actions for the 2022 Programme for Government

- Announce the future scope and scale of advice, knowledge sharing and skills development for farmers in 2022 with detailed plans by 2023.
- Build mandatory advice into farm-level support and capital grants, starting with Track 2 of the National Test Programme in 2022.
- Starting in 2022, refresh and extend mandatory CPD on climate and biodiversity for all new and existing farm advisors.
- Commit to action in early 2023 to kickstart the strengthening of the land-based training and education system in response to the Commission on Land-based learning as soon as possible.

Conclusion

The Climate Emergency Response Group supports this package of proposals because they will remove barriers that are blocking progress and undermining Scotland's chances of meeting its targets.

The Net Zero Test will lead to better policy and investment decisions, saving time and money along the way. Supporting local authorities to deliver on decarbonising our homes and city centre transformations will ensure solutions are tailored to local needs and circumstances. And building skills in our farmers and crofters will give the agriculture sector a head start on shifting to low carbon practice and production.

We hope the Scottish Government will take up these recommendations to lead and enable a concerted effort which engages and supports all parts of the public sector, business, and civic society in the just transition to net zero.

“...this is the year for
a tangible shift from
strategy to action...”



The organisations supporting the work and progress of the Climate Emergency Response Group are:

