



Children in Scotland

Net Zero Nation Draft Public Engagement Strategy For Climate Change 19th March 2021

Children in Scotland is pleased to respond to the consultation on the Net Zero Nation Draft Public Engagement Strategy For Climate Change. It is particularly relevant to the following areas of our work:

Participation and engagement

Children and young people's participation in decision making is central to Children in Scotland's vision and values and is one of our five organisational priorities. We have a well-established work programme supporting the participation and engagement of children and young people, as well as their families, in shaping policy and services. Over the past 20 years we have developed innovative approaches to support the participation of children and young people across a range of ages, from early and pre-school years to 25 years old. We have expertise in engaging with children and young people with additional support needs.

We have implemented our commitment to participation in the working of our organisation. Our children and young people's advisory group, Changing our World, provide input to decision-making at both strategic and general level, including our policy focus, responses to consultations and staff recruitment.

This group identified climate change as a key issue for children and young people, and the environment was highlighted as a key area they wanted to focus their work on. They told us: "*words should be turned into actions, information [should be given] on how to change, becoming bothered to change*".

Children in Scotland Manifesto 2021-26

Climate Change is one of the 10 themes identified in our Manifesto 2021-26.¹ Children in Scotland's leadership role within the children's sector on this issue is an important one – the climate emergency is often not within the scope of our members to engage with in any detailed way while they are dealing with

¹See Children in Scotland, Manifesto for 2021-26 at <file:///C:/Users/pshirazi/OneDrive%20-%20Children%20in%20Scotland/Documents/Manifesto-2021-26%20full%20version.pdf>.



significant day-to-day challenges facing families and young people, including housing, health and food insecurity, particularly within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. We are happy to share and amplify the voices and opinions of our members and partners, including the young people with whom we work.

Consultation Questions: Our Approach

1. Objectives

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

We are supportive of the three strategic objectives outlined. We believe they work together to ensure that communities can take part in addressing climate change. First, by providing an understanding of the issue and its importance, followed by genuine opportunities to participate and the ability to make informed decisions to act themselves.

We welcome the aims of ensuring that people are aware of actions taken by the Scottish Government and that they actively participate in shaping fair and inclusive policies. We must emphasise that this participation must be genuine and carried out in a manner that works well for its intended audience. It must avoid being tokenistic – this point will be expanded upon in our responses to questions 2 (a) and 2(c).

The objective of normalising encouraging action on climate changes in communities is welcomed.

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

No, we welcome the outlined objectives and look forward to seeing how this engagement is carried out in practice.

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

We would support an overarching approach that puts human rights, health and wellbeing at the heart of the process. Children in Scotland is a key partner in the Children's Wellbeing Budget for Scotland project, led by Katherine Trebeck.² This project may provide guidance on how to put wellbeing at the heart of this process.

² <https://childreninscotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Childrens-Wellbeing-Budgets-Interim-Report-Dec2020-Gecko-2.2.pdf>



We are aware the recently published Scottish Government position statement for the National Planning Framework 4 makes a specific link between wellbeing and a green recovery.

A true commitment to a wellbeing economy places wellbeing as the central driver of the economy. This would include a commitment to removing inequalities and eradicating poverty but would not necessarily view economic growth as a key focus. When considering Scotland's ambitions to achieve net-zero emissions, thought must be given as to how this can be achieved alongside improving the wellbeing of Scotland's population and in particular its children and young people.

2. Principles

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

We support the principles for public engagement outlined.

The principle of "Putting People First" aligns with the rights-based approach we have called for in our manifesto.³ A "rights-based approach" means empowering people to be aware of and claim their rights, alongside enhancing the ability and accountability of individuals and institutions who are responsible for respecting, protecting and fulfilling them.⁴ We welcome the aims of understanding and responding to people's concerns, alongside ensuring that the decision-making process is inclusive.

We welcome the acknowledgment in the principles of engagement that climate change is a social justice issue through having a "just transition". We agree with the statement that "those most impacted by our changing climate have often contributed least to the problem" and support the government's aim of working with affected communities to ensure the transition is carried out in a way that is fair for them.

We are encouraged that the government aims to ensure that its engagement is inclusive. Inclusion is a principle that is carried through all aspects of our work. We make particular efforts to include and amplify the voices of those who are seldom heard, such as children and young people

³ Children in Scotland Manifesto ^1

⁴ <http://careaboutrights.scottishhumanrights.com/whatisahumanrightsbasedapproach.html>.



who have additional support needs⁵ or those who experience health inequalities.⁶

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

N/A

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

We do not believe that any principles are missing but we have several suggestions on how to ensure these principles are carried out in practice.

Genuine participation must be meaningful and cannot merely be superficial or a “tick-box exercise”.⁷ As stated in our answer to question 2(a), we welcome the principle of being inclusive. When carrying out this principle in practice it is important to highlight the necessity of a flexible approach. This can mean adapting methods or materials, ensuring a suitable environment and adopting flexible ways of working to accommodate the needs of the particular group that you are hoping to engage with.⁸

3. Other comments

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

Whilst we appreciate the intention of encouraging citizens to carry out actions that will help combat climate change, we suggest these be facilitated and made possible by those in power. For example, if recycling bins in a local authority are not emptied regularly, this makes it difficult for those in the community to recycle.

Furthermore, the government needs to engage with businesses and corporations to ensure that their practices are changed and the goods they provide are delivered in a more environmentally friendly manner. In the words of one member of Changing Our World, “our obsession with wealth is

⁵ Further detail on our Inclusion Ambassadors at <https://childreninscotland.org.uk/inclusion-ambassadors/>

⁶ Read about our participative research project with children and young people at <https://childreninscotland.org.uk/health-inequalities-participative-research-project/>.

⁷ We have developed our own guidelines for those working with children and young people, please see Meaningful Participation and Engagement of Children and Young People: Children in Scotland's Principles and Guidelines (2019), found at <https://childreninscotland.org.uk/childrens-voice-at-heart-of-new-participation-and-engagement-guidelines/>.

⁸ Ibid.



killing our planet”.⁹ Without this engagement, the “transformational societal changes, impacting how we travel, heat our homes, and how we consume goods and services” mentioned in the draft strategy is unlikely to be achieved. Individual action should not be viewed as a replacement for governmental action.

Consultation Questions: Green Recovery

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

We believe there is great opportunity for public engagement in the Green Recovery.

We welcome the independent advisory report to the Committee on Climate Change recommendation that we need a strategy for creating a wider context that nurtures public engagement with action on climate change. We acknowledge this draft public engagement strategy aims to create a context that nurtures public engagement on climate change over the next 3-5 years and believe mid to long term planning is an essential element to ensure climate crisis is averted. However, this should not prohibit direct action being taken by the Scottish Government to reduce carbon emissions now, responding to the urgent need for change.

In recent years, the environment has become an issue that has galvanised children and young people nationally and internationally. It is a key issue for Children in Scotland's young people's advisory group Changing our World, some of whom are involved in designing and delivering two national environment hustings events ahead of the Scottish Election in May 2021, including 'The Climate Hot Seat'¹⁰. In planning this event, it was recognised that whilst children and young people are passionate about the environment, they may not have been provided with detailed knowledge of some issues. Therefore, a pre-event for young people has been organised with experts in the field invited to speak to young people about issues such as transport, agriculture and fossil fuels. There will also be the opportunity for the young people to engage directly with the experts and ask questions. We believe that the Scottish Government could have equally creative solutions to reducing barriers for inclusion, thereby making this strategy more far-reaching.

The Covid-19 pandemic has served to highlight the importance of green space for our physical and mental health. It has also raised more questions on

⁹ See Children in Scotland, Manifesto for 2021-26 < https://childreninscotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Manifesto-2021-26-V1_Spreads.pdf >

¹⁰ <https://www.youthlinkscotland.org/news/february-2021/party-leaders-to-feature-in-young-peoples-climate-hot-seat-event/>



the impact of greenhouse gases, observing a notable decrease in emissions during periods of lockdown. However, it is likely levels will rise again once restrictions are lifted and economic recovery becomes a national focus.¹¹ A Green Recovery must reflect on the learning from the last year with regard to the benefits of access to green space and the environmental impacts of lower emissions

The upcoming COP26 international event to be held in Glasgow is another opportunity to engage with people in Scotland regarding Green Recovery. We are pleased the Scottish Government has partners to support this engagement, including The Glasgow Science Centre. However, through our ongoing work, as well as our report for the Scottish Government 'The impact of children and young people's participation on policymaking', we know common challenging aspects to engagement include: planning, funding, timescales, inclusion, feedback and follow-up.¹² These need to be acknowledged and planned for.

Climate change is a social justice issue, which may also prove a challenge to engagement. Children and young people and the most disadvantaged families in our society will be among those most adversely affected by climate change and environmental damage. Even now, these groups are already disproportionately experiencing the negative impact of pollution. For example, we know that poor air quality is particularly prevalent in spaces used by children, such as around schools, and this can have a significant impact on children's health and growth.

We believe more must be done to support the participation of vulnerable groups, including those with additional support needs and younger children. Adequate time, resource, planning and partnerships can support wider engagement and must be factored in. Doing so will improve preparation for engagement, including the development of any 'specialist methods', and ultimately improve the work and outcomes.

Partnership working is essential to facilitate engagement where policymakers do not feel they have the skills themselves. Action is required to ensure that all children and young people are engaged in this issue, as well as families living in areas of deprivation. A green recovery from the pandemic is vital to ensure positive outcomes for all children, young people and families, and specifically those most disadvantaged. We believe this should be through the support of organisations and agencies who already have a relationship with these groups.

¹¹ <https://post.parliament.uk/environment-and-covid-19-what-are-experts-concerned-about/>

¹² <https://www.gov.scot/publications/impact-children-young-peoples-participation-policy-making/>



Using digital technologies as a method for people to engage in the process must be considered in detail, including both the opportunities and significant challenges or limitations.

The coronavirus pandemic has meant Children in Scotland has moved all of our methods of engagement online. This provides many benefits including supporting people from more remote areas to engage in our work. It has also facilitated us working with higher numbers of children and young people.

However, it is important to remember that these methods bring their own challenges and limitations. For example, it is important that digital methods of engagement do not only rely on surveys as a way of gathering people's views. We know these methods do not work for many children and young people, particularly younger children and those with additional support needs, and as such can limit who will be able to contribute. In addition, the coronavirus pandemic has exposed the significant digital divide in Scotland. We know that many people struggle to access digital technology because of barriers such as cost and rural infrastructure. While these inequalities remain, digital methods of engagement will continue to exclude certain groups and communities.

In a post pandemic Scotland, digital methods of engagement should not be seen as a direct replacement for face-to-face work but instead should be used to complement other engagement work where possible.

Consultation Questions: Communicating Climate Change Policy

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

Children in Scotland is supportive of the Scottish Government's planning for net-zero emissions. We have called on all political parties to pursue net-zero emissions by 2045 in our Manifesto for 2021-26.¹³

We welcome the objective of taking action on climate change to be normalised and encouraged. For children and young people, school and the curriculum will play a major role in this. In our Manifesto we have called for the embedding of education about climate change in the curriculum, in line with a wider review of Curriculum for Excellence. This would support children and young people from all backgrounds to be informed and able to critically engage in discussions on climate change and climate change policy.

In 2020 Children in Scotland was commissioned by the Scottish Government to work with Young Scot on raising awareness and understanding of

¹³ https://childreninscotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Manifesto-2021-26-V2_Spreads.pdf



children's rights across Scotland – this was to include children and young people and the adults in their lives.

Over 6 months we worked with children and young people (aged 3 upwards). We produced various outputs, including the comprehensive resource 'Activate Your Rights'.¹⁴ We believe a similar approach would support public engagement in this area.

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?

We are aware of lots of excellent projects run with children and young people around the environment and climate change, supporting their knowledge and understanding of the issue. It is a complex area but a child rights and co-design approach to delivery ensures children and young people can enjoy their right to have their voice heard on this topic that impacts on their lives so heavily.

Children in Scotland has completed a number of projects with children and young people related to the environment and climate change in recent years. We have also developed Principles and Guidelines¹⁵ for meaningful participation and engagement of children and young people which covers three areas: planning and coordination; delivery; reporting, evaluation and next steps. We share these guidelines publicly and offer training sessions for people working with and for children and young people.

Examples of relevant engagement projects

In 2020 we delivered the Changing Gears project with Cycling Scotland to explore children's views of road safety and active travel.¹⁶ The project provided a range of evidence about the steps required to support children and young people to engage in active travel more frequently.¹⁷ It involved a national youth co-design group and was run in partnership with schools in a variety of areas across Scotland (urban and rural). This co-design approach ensured it was a fun, creative and engaging project for the children and schools involved.

Also in 2020, Children in Scotland published the final report for our Health Inequalities: Participative Research project.¹⁸ During the project we supported 15 young peer researchers living in areas of deprivation to explore

¹⁴ <https://youngscot.net/learning-resources#activate-your-rights>

¹⁵ <https://childreninscotland.org.uk/childrens-voice-at-heart-of-new-participation-and-engagement-guidelines/>

¹⁶ <https://childreninscotland.org.uk/cycling-scotland/>

¹⁷ Report due to be published in Spring 2021.

¹⁸ <https://childreninscotland.org.uk/health-inequalities-participative-research-project/>



how their neighbourhoods could impact on children and young people's health, wellbeing and contribute to inequalities. This approach of peer researchers ensured young people were leading the project, sharing their experience and opinions, whilst developing skills for life and work.

In 2019-20 Children in Scotland worked with children and young people from three very different areas in Scotland to shape Crown Estate Scotland's Corporate Plan 2020-26.¹⁹ It was essential to make this complex area an accessible experience for all, supporting the children and young people's understanding of Crown Estate Scotland's work and commitments whilst making it relatable to their own views and experience. We achieved this through developing accessible information and visual and creative activities.

We are aware that Young Scot are currently working with the Scottish Government on the Youth Guarantee which aims to make sure that all young people between 16-24 are in employment, education, volunteering or an apprenticeship.²⁰ It would be worth considering how programmes such as these, where young people are highly engaged, can be used to engage with young people and communicate climate change. We would ask how can planning for net-zero be embedded within the Youth Guarantee?

Scottish Youth Parliament have also had a very successful environment focused campaign over the last 18 months - Pack It Up, Pack It In.²¹ It concentrated on reducing pollution levels which contribute to climate change. The overarching aim of the campaign was to empower young people to speak out and take action to reduce pollution levels in Scotland. This approach of supporting young people to be campaigners and activists helps people feel empowered.

Consultation Questions: Enabling Participation in Policy Design

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

This is particularly pertinent as Scotland continues to progress towards incorporation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Article 12 of the convention articulates that children and young people have a right to be heard in decisions that affect them. This includes decision-making processes and policy design.

¹⁹ <https://childreninscotland.org.uk/crown-estate/>

²⁰ <https://youngscot.net/news-database/ypguarantee#:~:text=The%20aim%20of%20the%20Guarantee,an%20apprenticeship%20or%20training%20programme>

²¹ <https://syp.org.uk/campaign/pack-it-up-pack-it-in/>



We believe wherever possible children and young people should be engaged throughout the whole policy-making process: from setting the agenda and developing the policy through to implementation and evaluation.²² We would refer you to The ROAMEF cycle which provides a bridge between public policy and private sector delivery.²³

We are pleased to see that there is reference in the draft engagement strategy to engaging communities in policy design. We believe this means providing resource to support engagement and ensuring that practitioners who are skilled in engaging with communities are available to facilitate this work.

It is important that the views of a variety of groups are actively sought within the engagement processes and that this work is conducted sensitively and appropriately. Different demographics have specific needs within their communities. We know from our work with more seldom heard voices that it is important to work with organisations embedded within these communities who are fully aware of their background and needs.

There has been clear progression within Scotland over recent years in terms of involving children and young people in policymaking. The development of the previous Child Poverty Strategy and peer-led approaches to substance misuse education are two good examples.²⁴

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 introduced provision to take account of the views of children in decisions that affect them and has resulted in the introduction of the Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA).

Alongside this, organisations (both statutory bodies and third sector) have developed considerable levels of knowledge, skills and experience in engagement work to support policy development and implementation. These must be the 'trusted messengers' to ensure engagement is a success and thus have a positive impact on climate change.

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?

In 2017 Children in Scotland was commissioned by the Scottish Government to explore the nature and type of impact children and young people's participation has had on national and local policymaking in Scotland.²⁵

²² <https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/insight6.pdf>

²³ <http://www.roamef.com/what-we-do/roamef-cycle>

²⁴ <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0039/00395693.pdf>

²⁵ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/impact-children-young-peoples-participation-policy-making/>



The six case studies included in the report revealed that children and young people have influenced policy across the country including decisions relating to police powers, the creation of a new health improvement post and improvements to the local children's hearings system.

We found that partnership working is essential to facilitate engagement where policymakers do not feel they have the skills themselves. Adequate preparation time is vital to ensure that methods are appropriate, accessible and offer meaningful opportunities for children and young people.

Organisations delivering successful engagement work use a variety of methods to support the involvement of children and young people. These include: utilising creative methods such as drama and art to support young people to participate and be heard; facilitating the co-design of policy; roundtables bringing decision makers and young people together in a shared space and young people leading on research and reporting.

The evidence from the case studies identified that, at present, engagement work is heavily weighted towards the 'data collection' stage, whether this is an event, a visit, focus group, survey or interview. It is important to ensure that more emphasis is placed earlier in the process on planning, and later on during evaluation and feedback.

Consultation Questions: Encouraging Action

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

We welcome the aim of supporting climate change education. We believe that this should be included in the school curriculum, so all children have an equal chance to learn about climate change issues and its importance. As previously stated, we have called for this change in our Manifesto 2021-26. The scale of the climate emergency requires a societal response, and with it comes a recognition that we all need to learn how this emergency can be averted and what actions we can take as individuals to support a green recovery.

Members of Changing Our World have shared their concern over how climate change is taught in schools and have called for the curriculum not just to cover facts and opinions about the climate crisis but also the opportunity to consider potential action. We agree and believe this would reflect the Responsible Citizen aspect of Curriculum For Excellence.

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?

We refer you to our partner organisations as outlined in question 12.



Consultation Questions: COP26

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

We are not aware of detailed plans for COP26 so do not feel able to comment fully.

However, any plans must take cognisance of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework to gain support from decision-makers and ensure a legacy for Scotland's people and climate action.

We are aware there is an opportunity for local people to volunteer, share their expertise and develop skills. This has the potential to support people into employment and training, including young people and those living in areas of deprivation. We welcome the potential legacy this supports for the people of Glasgow.

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

A pre-event engagement programme across Scotland is one way to ensure this. We are aware of the 'Youth4Climate: Driving Ambition' meeting in Milan planned for September 2021, offering young people from all over the world the opportunity to develop concrete proposals for COP26. We would support a similar Scotland-based plan, run by trusted and established partners.

Children in Scotland and Youth Link are currently supporting young people from across Scotland to develop and deliver two environment-focused hustings events (a pre-event and 'The Climate Hot Seat'²⁶ main event) for other young people. This co-design approach supports their right to be heard and offers an opportunity to be active agents impacting on climate change.

By taking cognisance of the Sustainable Development Goals, this may be a way of engaging with schools across Scotland. Scotdec²⁷, Wosdec²⁸ and Learning For Sustainability Scotland²⁹ already have an excellent network of schools and educationalists working with children and young people in this area. COP26 may provide an opportunity to engage more widely.

²⁶ <https://www.youthlinkscotland.org/news/february-2021/party-leaders-to-feature-in-young-peoples-climate-hot-seat-event/>

²⁷ <https://scotdec.org.uk/>

²⁸ <https://wosdec.org.uk/>

²⁹ <https://learningforsustainabilityscotland.org/>



We are also aware there are social media campaigns linked to COP26, including #togetherforourplanet and #racetozero. These online campaigns could present an opportunity to engage with a range of stakeholders to raise awareness of climate change and support engagement.

As stated above, partnership working is essential to ensure that all children, young people and families are engaged in this issue. We believe this should be through the support of organisations and agencies who already have a relationship with children, young people and families.

Through our work with Youth Link Scotland, supporting young people to design and deliver 'The Climate Hot Seat' hustings event and pre-event, we are aware of a range of organisations working with young people in this area. For example, Scottish Youth Parliament, 2050 Climate Group, Teach the Future, Stop Climate Change Chaos and Fridays For Future Scotland.

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

We are unaware of other initiatives that the Scottish Government should consider joining or supporting at this time.

Consultation Questions: Monitoring and Evaluation

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

Children in Scotland believes that stakeholders, including children and young people, should be active participants in the evaluation design. This will ensure community engagement and that the evaluation focuses on measuring impact in the areas that are important to people.

This should be coupled with high level monitoring and evaluation of progress towards the sustainable development goals and the National Performance Framework.

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

We do not have any comments to make on how regularly the Scottish Government should report on progress specifically, but we have suggestions of good practice for reporting.³⁰

³⁰ CiS *Participation and Engagement Guidelines* ^ 7.





Firstly, those you have engaged with should know what has happened with the views they shared and whether this has led to any changes. Even if no change is possible where they asked for it, this should still be communicated, and the reason why given. The language in reports or feedback should be clear and accessible. If reporting for children and young people, avoid using acronyms or jargon. Reports and results should be easy to access and understand.

One option for reporting could be a detailed, technical report alongside a more accessible summary report. Other forms of presentation, such as a film or social media graphics, could also be considered.

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