

News release on behalf of the Accounts Commission

Embargoed until 00:01 hours, Thursday, 8 September 2022

Scotland's councils must put tackling climate change at the heart of decision-making

Councils have a critical role in helping Scotland achieve its national climate change goals, in particular reducing CO2 emissions and adapting and transforming services. Climate change must be central and integral to all council activity.

The Accounts Commission, the independent body that holds councils to account, has published a briefing highlighting the vital role of councils in addressing climate change and identifying areas where further action is needed to address the climate change emergency.

Reducing the CO2 emissions councils produce is vital – councils' corporate emissions are the largest element of all public sector emissions in Scotland. And because some of the harms caused by climate change cannot now be undone, councils need to help communities mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change, such as increasing extreme weather events.

The briefing finds there are significant differences in the targets councils have set. Greater clarity is needed about what's included in targets and how councils will deal with residual emissions to achieve Net Zero targets. Council climate change action plans must also be clearer about gaps and challenges.

It highlights the need for:

- climate change to be embedded in the key decisions councils make
- public bodies and communities to collaborate to address climate change
- clear and transparent emissions plans and targets to be put in place by councils
- an increased pace to deliver transformation in how we travel, live and work

William Moyes, Chair of the Accounts Commission said:

“Successfully addressing climate change is a colossal challenge, which Scotland's councils cannot confront alone. We need to see effective and meaningful collaboration across the entirety of our public sector, working alongside businesses and local communities. To mitigate the worst harms of climate change will require collective will and individual determination, not least to realise significant behavioural change.

This is the crucial decade for action on tackling climate change and councils have a critical role in meeting national targets and demonstrating real leadership.”

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Notes to editors

1. Audit Scotland has prepared this report for the Accounts Commission. All Audit Scotland reports published since 2000 are available at www.audit-scotland.gov.uk:

- The Accounts Commission holds councils and other local government bodies in Scotland to account and helps them improve by reporting to the public on their performance. We operate impartially and independently of councils and of the Scottish Government
- Audit Scotland is a statutory body set up in April 2000, under the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act, 2000. It provides services to the Auditor General for Scotland and the Accounts Commission for Scotland.