

## WWF SCOTLAND MEDIA BRIEFING

### Scotland's Climate Story: An Overview

The Scottish Government was one of the first in the world to declare a climate emergency and was one of the first to set ambitious and binding climate mitigation targets in law, with the 2009 Climate Change Act. This legislation was voted through unanimously by all parties in the Scottish Parliament- demonstrating the cross-party consensus on action needed to tackle climate change.

Our climate act of 2009 was one of the first pieces of legislation on climate change, setting world leading targets on emissions reductions. Scotland has since committed to ending its contribution to climate change entirely by 2045, in the 2019 Climate Change Act.

While international development is reserved to Westminster, the Scottish Government still created a Climate Justice Fund in 2012 to fund and support those most impacted by climate change in lower income countries to survive and adapt.

And while not officially a party to the UN climate convention, the Scottish Government voluntarily submitted an indicative Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC)- the climate plans all parties must submit before the Glasgow meeting to show how they will meet the Paris Agreement and reduce emissions in line with the 1.5 degree threshold. A WWF International assessment of NDCs praised Scotland's mitigation targets for 2030 and 2045 as showing "genuine global leadership in aligning to the 1.5°C ambition" and said the publication of an indicative NDC was "a strong example of Scotland's participatory and just transition policy-making in practice." [1]

Scottish Government has also committed to transforming its electricity sector- to meet 100% of the country's electricity demand from renewables by 2020. This target has been narrowly missed, with 95.9% of electricity demand being met by renewables in 2020. [2] However, on a day-to-day basis, Scotland regularly generates more than 100% of its electricity demand from renewables [3] and is home to the largest onshore wind site in the UK, the world's biggest tidal array off the coast of Orkney, and the world's first commercial-scale floating windfarm.

With less than 1% of the population of Europe, Scotland has 25% of Europe's entire offshore wind power resources, 25% of Europe's tidal energy resources and 10% of wave potential. [4] Emissions in Scotland have fallen most sharply from generation of our energy supply - with a 70% reduction between 1990 (22MtCO<sub>2</sub>e) and 2018 (8.8MtCO<sub>2</sub>e). However, other sectors haven't seen such dramatic improvement. For example, in the same period, emissions from transport have only fallen by c5%, and residential emissions from heating have only fallen by 22%. [5]

As a result, the Scottish Government is not currently on track to meet its new climate targets, and current policy efforts beyond electricity, are not going far enough. Scotland must move faster on emissions from land use and agriculture, and decarbonising homes and buildings.

The Scottish Government set up the Just Transition Committee- an independent commission of experts tasked to develop recommendations to ensure the benefits of the transition to a net zero society are shared equally and no one is left behind. [6]

What does climate change mean for Scotland?

If we fail to keep to the 1.5 aligned pathway of emissions reductions, scientists predict that Scotland's future climate will mean warmer and wetter winters and hotter drier summers, with greater extremes in both rainfall and heat. By 2080, without significant reductions in global greenhouse gas emissions, Scotland's winters could be 19% wetter and 2.7 degrees warmer. Our

summers could be 3 degrees warmer and 18% drier. Sea levels can be expected to rise, with some projections even estimating the COP26 site along the river Clyde could be under water by 2050. [7]

While it is those in lower income countries who have done least to cause climate change who are facing its dreadful impacts first and worst, we are already starting to see climate impacts here in Scotland.

Just a single wildfire in the Flow Country - a part of northern Scotland under consideration for World Heritage Site status due to its rare type of blanket peatland- which burned for six days in May 2019, released the equivalent of six times our daily average greenhouse gas emissions in the whole of Scotland, as well as destroying this globally rare habitat. [8]

The extreme weather we experienced in 2018, which saw an unusually prolonged winter, delayed spring, and very hot and dry summer, saw Scotland's agriculture sector affected. Production of winter barley was down 24%. Farmers reported a spike in livestock losses and water supplies running dry. [9]

An estimated one in nine Scottish species are at risk of extinction due to climate change, including the red squirrel and capercaillie, with further species under increased pressure, including mountain hare and puffins. [10], [11]

What needs to happen?

While Scotland has committed to high level climate action, our annual climate emissions targets have been missed three years in a row. This highlights the need for a step change in implementation to ensure ambition is matched with action.

There are several key areas to be addressed by domestic policy, including emissions from land use and agriculture, as well as the decarbonisation of our energy systems beyond electricity- namely a big drive is needed to deliver decarbonisation of our homes and buildings.

Despite the fact Scotland is not a party to the COP, it is clear that states, regions, and non-state actors still have a crucial role to play in setting ambition, demonstrating just transition policy-making in practice and demonstrating leadership.

Spokespeople available for interview:

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- Lang Banks, WWF Scotland director (also a former member of the Scottish Government Just Transition Commission)
- Dr Sheila George, WWF Scotland agriculture and land use policy manager

Case studies:

Scottish Power Renewables: Whitelee Windfarm <https://www.whiteleewindfarm.co.uk/>

Climate Ready Clyde <https://www.adaptationscotland.org.uk/get-involved/our-projects/climate-ready-clyde>

Feeling the heat: state of nature beyond 1.5 degree rise

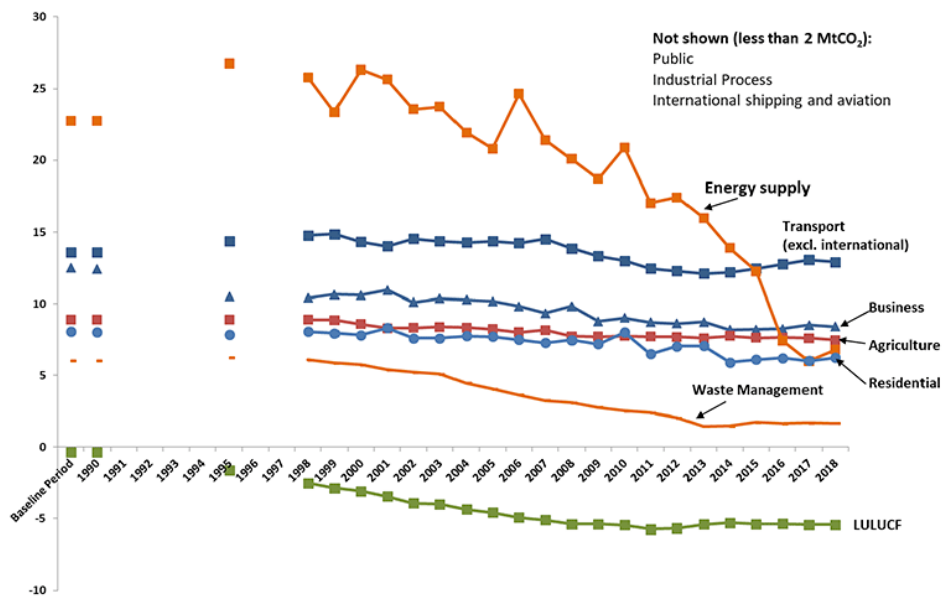
<https://www.wwf.org.uk/updates/scottish-species-risk-temperatures-rise>

## NOTES:

- [1] WWF- NDCs We Want: [wwf\\_ndcs\\_we\\_want\\_assessment\\_scotland\\_indc.pdf \(panda.org\)](#)
- [2] Gross electricity consumption from renewables: latest figures are provisional for 2020 = 95.9%. [Scotland+Energy+Stats+Q2+2021.pdf \(www.gov.scot\)](#)
- [3] Scotland is a net exporter of electricity, and in 2020 31.8TWh of renewable electricity was generated in Scotland. This is the equivalent of powering all households in Scotland for almost three and a half years. [Renewable energy in Scotland \(parliament.uk\)](#)
- [4] [New figures show Scotland is leading the renewable energy revolution – Business for Scotland](#)
- [5] <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-greenhouse-gas-emissions-2018/documents/>
- [6] Scottish Government Just Transition Commission <https://www.gov.scot/groups/just-transition-commission/> [WWF Scotland director, Lang Banks, is a former member of the Commission]
- [7] Climate Central projections estimate the SEC and Hydro could be under water by 2050 [The areas of Scotland that could be underwater by 2050 | HeraldScotland](#)
- [8] WWF Scotland report: Carbon Loss and Economic Impacts of a Wildfire in Scottish Flow Country <https://www.wwf.org.uk/updates/new-report-single-scottish-wildfire-could-have-doubled-scotlands-climate-emissions-six-days>
- [9] WWF Scotland report: Impact of Extreme Weather on Scottish Farmers 2018 <https://www.wwf.org.uk/updates/new-report-severe-weather-cost-scottish-farmers-ps161m-2018>
- [10] State of Nature Report <https://www.rspb.org.uk/our-work/state-of-nature-report/>
- [11] Feeling the Heat: state of nature beyond 1.5 degree rise <https://www.wwf.org.uk/updates/scottish-species-risk-temperatures-rise>
- [12] [Adaptation Scotland :: Climate trends and projections](#)

## APPENDIX 1:

# Main Sources of Greenhouse Gas Emissions in Scotland, 1990 to 2018. Values in MtCO<sub>2</sub>e



Source: [Scottish Greenhouse Gas Emissions 2019 \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)