

Climate Change - Net Zero Nation: draft public engagement strategy - consultation – Scottish Youth Parliament response
March 2021

Consultation Questions: Our Approach

1. Objectives

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

Overall, we agree with these strategic objectives.

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?*

We would like to see a greater focus on engagement and participation of young people and people in seldom-heard groups who may not currently be engaged or do not feel they are able to participate in climate change discussions and actions. This is supported by evidence from our current youth manifesto, *From Scotland's Young People*, which states “*Children and young people from seldom heard groups (such as immigrants and refugees, gypsy traveller communities, single parents, disabled people, Armed Forces, care experienced, and justice experienced) must be listened to by policymakers on issues that affect them.*” (From Scotland's Young People manifesto statement – 80.4% agree – available at <https://bit.ly/31SdAfh>)

Furthermore, **we would like to see an objective which more explicitly commits to promoting and upholding the rights of people in Scotland in relation to climate justice and participation.**

2. Principles

a) *What are your views on our seven principles 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?*

We would like to see a greater focus on reviewing processes and outcomes throughout the lifetime of the strategy.

Although children and young people's rights are mentioned, **we would like to see greater emphasis on meaningful involvement of children and young people,**



and commitment to a human rights based approach to the delivery of this strategy.

3. Other comments

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

Consultation Questions: Green Recovery

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

It is essential that action is taken to ensure young people are not unfairly disadvantaged by steps to deliver a green recovery.

In August 2020, SYP responded to the Scottish Parliament's Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform's Green Recovery: Call for Views (the full response is available online at <https://bit.ly/31zgO7b>). This response was based on the results of a focus group with seven members of SYP's Conveners Group. A further three young people responded to the questions in writing.

In relation to the challenges for delivering a green recovery, young people who took part in this focus group told us:

- **“Young people must be involved every step of the way.”** – The young people involved in this discussion agreed that a key barrier to delivering a green recovery is the lack of engagement with young people. Some of the MSYPs feel frustrated that decision-makers don't always appear to be listening to young people's views, while others felt that engagement with young people is not always meaningful or inclusive. One participant said “the inclusion of young people cannot be tokenistic or limited to contributions to small change. Young people should also be included in the more radical measures being taken, and their voices should be heard on this at every level.”
- **“Going green can be more costly”** – The group highlighted cost as one of the main barriers to a green recovery, both for individuals and for local authorities. For example, in response to our *Pack it up, Pack it in* campaign consultation, one quarter of young people told us they would be encouraged to use more environmentally friendly packaging, such as reusable cups and bottles, if it was cheaper or free. The high costs of reusable packaging (for example) can be prohibitive, particularly if reusable alternatives are not readily available (report available at: <https://bit.ly/3sFNrMi>). Similarly, our *All Aboard* campaign report (available at <https://bit.ly/2ObAuLq>) highlighted that the cost of using public transport is too high, particularly if young people only earn minimum wage or don't live close to the places they need or want to visit. In relation to local authorities, the young people involved in the focus group recognised that even before the pandemic, many local



authorities were making budget cuts. These young people expressed concern that “cash strapped local authorities will focus on money saving over green recovery.”

- **“Convincing people the simple changes are worth saving the planet.”** – The group identified the challenges of changing individual and collective attitudes and behaviours as a major challenge. They felt some people perceive environmental changes to be ‘inconvenient’, or too difficult. For example, they identified that young people in rural areas may face greater barriers due to poorer physical and digital connectivity, a lack of access to public transport, and greater reliance on cars because active travel is not a safe or feasible option. Likewise, they highlighted that with the reopening of businesses, particularly the hospitality sector, there has been an increase in litter and single-use packaging waste, and significantly fewer takeaway businesses are allowing the use of reusable alternatives (such as drinks cups).
- **“It’s a complex issue, but does not need to be explained in a complicated way”** - For many young people, the language used to discuss environmental issues is inaccessible and overcomplicated. Similarly, the use of scientific and economic jargon can be off-putting, and inhibits young people from meaningfully participating in discussion and decision-making around these issues. The MSYPs involved in the focus group felt that more effort should be made to use language that is accessible, and to explain complicated information more clearly. They also felt a whole-system approach should be taken, to ensure everyone is able to participate and contribute to a green recovery.
- **“Ensuring geographical and community fairness in a green recovery is important.”** – The young people involved in the focus group were particularly concerned that there may be inequity in the approaches taken to achieve a green recovery across the country. In particular, they felt it is important that “all areas are allowed to excel, rather than favouring either rural or urban areas, for example”. They were also concerned that green investment should be shared equitably between rural and urban areas. Furthermore, they highlighted the challenges of engagement with seldom heard groups, and particularly with those in communities who may be at greater risk of poverty or isolation as a result of new measures to introduce a green recovery.

In relation to the opportunities for delivering a green recovery, our response to the Scottish Parliament’s Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform’s Green Recovery: Call for Views outlines a number of key policies, actions, and priorities we believe are needed to deliver a green recovery – we would encourage the Scottish Government to review our response to this call for views (<https://bit.ly/31zgO7b>). In summary:

- It is clear that Scotland’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic has had a huge impact on the rights of children and young people. Whilst we acknowledge that decisions had to be made quickly, and for the safety of



the country's residents, it is essential that thorough Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessments are carried out for all law and policy that affects Scotland's young people.

- In line with Scotland's commitment to uphold young people's rights, particularly Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) – “every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously” – it is essential that young people are actively consulted, engaged, and involved in any actions taken to deliver a green recovery.
- Education is essential to ensure Scotland's young people are informed and confident to make decisions that will affect their own lives and those of others.
- Throughout the pandemic, it has become clear that the impact of lockdown, and related decisions, have had a greater impact on young people who were most at risk, including those living in, and at risk of, poverty. It is essential that any actions to implement a green recovery will not have a further detrimental impact on the lives of these young people. The COVID-19 recovery period offers an opportunity for Scotland to review how we address poverty and income inequality in a green and just way.

Consultation Questions: Communicating Climate Change Policy

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

With regards to the proposed *Net Zero Nation* website, **we believe children and young people should be involved in the design of this hub and associated marketing materials to ensure resources are accessible and engaging for children and young people** (page 19-20).

Furthermore, **we would like to see dedicated seats for young people within groups such as the Climate Change Communications Working Group to ensure children and young people have a voice directly at the table where decisions are made** (page 20).

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?*

Please refer to our response to question 4 (*What are your views on the opportunities and challenges for public engagement in the Green Recovery?*) which addresses young people's views in relation to this question.



Consultation Questions: Enabling Participation in Policy Design

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

We note with thanks the opportunity for Liam Fowley MSYP, Vice Chair of SYP, to sit on the Stewarding Group of Scotland's Climate Assembly. This is a positive action to ensure young people's views are brought directly to the decision-making process by young people.

Further, we welcome the commitment on page 22 to involve citizens in co-designing the policies which affect their lives both now and in the future. However, we have a number of other comments which we hope will support further improvements in this area:

- The final action on page 6 relating to this objective is 'Develop a new approach to ensuring a genuine role in the policy process for young people' However, the corresponding action on page 24 states 'we will continue to look for and implement opportunities to ensure that our young people have a voice in our future and can influence policy design.' We feel these actions are contradictory, and it is unclear whether the Scottish Government intends to create new opportunities, or to continue and improve existing opportunities for young people to have a voice in policy development. Furthermore, we are concerned about the phrase '*have a voice in our future*', as this implies children and young people's voices are not important now – a sentiment we are sure you do not intend.

To clarify this action, we suggest it is reworded to:

'We will continue to work with children and young people, and organisations who support them, to develop and implement opportunities to ensure they are able to meaningfully participate in policy development and delivery'

- With regards to Youth Participation (page 24), we were pleased to hear that "Scotland's Climate Assembly is running a youth engagement project alongside their deliberations, and that plans are being developed for meaningful youth engagement leading up to COP26". However, we are concerned that there may be a gap in evidence from high-school-aged young people - particularly those aged 16-18 – and that young people aged 16-25 are under-represented in Scotland's Climate Assembly in comparison to other age groups. **We would like to see further efforts to provide opportunities for young people, particularly those from seldom heard groups, to meaningfully engage with this process.**

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?



The Scottish Youth Parliament, as the democratically elected voice of Scotland's young people, regularly carries out Scotland-wide consultation activities, through projects, surveys and events, to identify the views and experiences of young people aged 14-25. We would be happy to discuss further opportunities to engage with the Scottish Government on issues relating to this strategy.

Consultation Questions: Encouraging Action

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

Our 2019 *Pack it up, Pack it in* report recommends: “Local Authorities and the Scottish Government should make funding and support available for young people and other community groups to carry out local projects to reduce the impact of littering and increase community pride in their local area.” (Recommendation 1, available at <https://bit.ly/3rHYeV4>). Although this recommendation focuses specifically on litter, we recognise the positive impact that funding such as the Climate Challenge Fund (CCF) can have on improving community engagement with climate change more widely. **We would like to see funding opportunities such as this promoted directly to young people and organisations working with young people to support youth-led projects within local communities.**

We welcome the commitment to launch a ‘network of regional hubs to ensure that community engagement is coordinated and that different approaches can be adopted in different areas’ (page 27). However, **we would like to see further commitment to engagement and support for seldom-heard groups, such as people with disabilities, people of colour, and people with caring responsibilities, to ensure they are not indirectly prevented from meaningfully participating in these approaches.**

We welcome the commitment to implementing the Learning for Sustainability action plan. Our *Pack it up, Pack it in* report also recommends “(a)ll young people in Scotland should receive improved practical environmental awareness education, and be empowered to take action to live more sustainably. To help achieve this, **the Scottish Government and Education Scotland should take a human rights based approach when implementing the ‘Learning for Sustainability (LfS) Action Plan’, by meaningfully including children and young people in the design and delivery of LfS programmes.**” (Recommendation 3, available at <https://bit.ly/3rHYeV4>).

With regards to the continued funding of the Eco-Schools Scotland Programme, and the Climate Ready Classrooms initiative, **we believe there is scope for these programmes, or similar activities, to be extended for use in outdoor education and non-formal education (youth work) settings.**

With regards the marketing campaigns outlined on page 28, we repeat our call for children and young people to be meaningfully involved in the design and delivery of national marketing campaigns to ensure messaging is accessible and engaging to children and young people. We would also like to see specific mention of social



media as a channel through which to present a positive vision of a net zero Scotland (page 28)

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?*

Consultation Questions: COP26

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

We welcome the commitment to promote youth engagement and participation in COP-related activities, but we would like to see a greater focus on how Scotland will promote and champion young people's rights through this work.

Although not directly related to this question, we would ask you to consider the language used when referring to young people. On page 31, the strategy states "We will promote youth engagement and participation in COP related activities to help ensure a positive legacy for **future generations**..." For many young people, use of the phrase 'next generation' or 'future generation' implies they do not matter now, but they will in the future. One young person told us 'It sort of defines us by our potential rather than our current successes... I'm 21, I'm an adult but still a young person, and it sort of implies that young people are not adults since it's talking about future potential.' We would like to see this sentence clarified to recognise the important role young people play in society today.

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?*

Consultation Questions: Monitoring and Evaluation

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

We are concerned that young people's views and attitudes do not appear to be included in monitoring and evaluation approaches outlined in this strategy. For example, we note that the Scottish Household Survey (SHS) may present an under-representation on the views of students in Scotland as this survey does not include those living in Halls of Residence. Furthermore, the SHS only reports on the *adult* population of Scotland which is not acknowledged in the strategy (page 34).

The Scottish Government may wish to consider expanding their understanding of young people's attitudes to climate change by including questions on this in the



IPSOS Mori Young People in Scotland survey (for example). However, it should be noted there are also limitations of this survey as it only takes a sample of 1,500 young people in schools. With this in mind, **we believe the Scottish Government should review their approach to monitoring and evaluation to ensure a wide range of young people's views are gathered throughout the process.**

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

Our current youth manifesto, *From Scotland's Young People*, states “public bodies (such as the NHS, the SQA, and Police Scotland) should work with young people to ensure that information is made available in a youth-friendly and accessible manner. They should also ensure that young people's views are taken into account when making decisions that affect them.” (From Scotland's Young People manifesto statement – 86.8% agree – available at <https://bit.ly/31SdAfh>)

We would like to see child-friendly reports, written in language which is accessible for all young people, to ensure children and young people are able to directly engage in activities relating to this strategy. This is something MSYPs have told us is important in relation to UNCRC reporting, and we believe the same should apply here. This will help to ensure young people have access to all information and are able to hold decision makers accountable.

