

**Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee**

**Draft Budget 2019-20**

**SUBMISSION FROM [UNISON Scotland]**

**INTRODUCTION**

UNISON is Scotland's largest trade union with members across the public, private and voluntary sectors. Our members have many roles in which climate change impacts on their specific work, as well as the ways in which it does for everyone – at work and at home. We have members working for the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (e.g. protecting our rivers, land and the air we breathe), in environmental health, collecting household and business waste, ensuring new buildings meet stricter environmental and energy efficiency targets, providing healthy, sustainable food to school children and hospital patients, and in a myriad other ways, including with Scottish Water, providing clean, safe water for home, work and industry. Also, members support our International Committee and Green Network to do considerable work promoting climate action and climate justice, locally, nationally and internationally. We welcome the opportunity to respond to the call for views in relation to the Committee's consideration of the Scottish Government's Draft Budget 2019/20.

As members of the Stop Climate Chaos Scotland Coalition and the Just Transition Partnership, we work hard to raise awareness of the need for urgent action on climate and to lobby for strong policies to deliver this. We are currently campaigning for increased ambition in the new Climate Bill, as well as for [establishing the Just Transition Commission in the Bill](#) on a statutory, long-term basis.

As the Committee will know, the SCCS coalition has called for the Bill to ensure that future finance budgets are consistent with our climate targets. The [SCCS briefing](#) on this states that:

*“At the moment, the Scottish Government has a Climate Change Plan which outlines the next steps they'll take on the road towards our zero carbon future. But as it stands, the Government doesn't have to say how much it's spending or planning to spend (if anything!) on specific initiatives to help achieve this plan.*

*“That means when the Scottish Government sits down to plan its budget, it's not obliged to think about the Climate Change Plan. That means it's easy to forget and it's too easy for it to sit on the shelf, gathering dust. We want the new Climate Change Bill to legally require the Government to show us the money, and link its budget to the Climate Change Plan. That way, actually delivering the Climate Change Plan will become more of a priority and we'll be able to tell more easily if the Government's investing the money needed to achieve it in practice.”*

Currently the data that the Scottish Government publishes is not comprehensive or transparent enough, often with bizarre consequences, for example, the new Forth Bridge

appearing much better for the climate than the re-opening of the Borders Railway, because it used less concrete and steel to build.

We believe the change we are calling for will make it far easier to scrutinise and assess the Budget and the Climate Change Plan in conjunction with one another, and we urge Committee members to support this in the Bill. Clearly, financial reporting by the Scottish Government and other public bodies should also be carried out in ways that allow for comparisons of the costings of preventative spending, a focus of the Committee's scrutiny. The Committee has said it wants to consider how the concept of preventative spend should be built into the formulation of the Scottish Government's budget. We welcome this.

### **COMMITTEE'S FOCUS IN THIS CALL FOR VIEWS**

The Committee has asked for information about evidence of what spending in the ECCLR portfolio is achieving in terms of the National Outcomes (via the relevant national indicators) and about estimated costs of programmes and evidence of cost savings on other parts of the budget.

We welcome the Committee focusing on identifying the most cost effective preventative investments in the ECCLR portfolio, particularly exploring the scope for wider benefits related to health and the economy.

Spending on action on climate change is in itself preventative spending. As was reported clearly in the Stern Review of the Economics of Climate Change in 2006, spending early on emissions reduction and on adaptation is less expensive than delaying and having to deal with the consequences of climate change. As Stern put it: "The benefits of strong and early action far outweigh the economic costs of not acting."

Ten years later, in 2016, [Nicholas Stern warned](#) that he hadn't been stark enough in his report, telling The Guardian: "With hindsight, I now realise that I underestimated the risks. I should have been much stronger in what I said in the report about the costs of inaction. I underplayed the dangers."

We believe the financial reality of this supports the already very strong case for strengthening the targets in the Bill, including to 77% by 2030 and net zero by 2050 at the latest, as called for by SCCS. We need to do this so that Scotland plays our part in ensuring that we have a habitable planet, because it gives us a chance of avoiding the dangerous runaway climate change that the Paris Agreement seeks to prevent, via the Paris targets of limiting global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, or at least well below 2 degrees Celsius.

Preventative spending in Scotland should be seen in that urgent light and it is a clear and important bonus that action and spending on active travel helps improve the nation's health, for example in reducing obesity and mental health problems; action and spending on improving air quality has enormous health benefits; action and spending on renewable energy contributes to reducing fuel poverty; action and spending on a range of

environmental regulation, such as carried out by SEPA and by local authorities helps protect the environment in numerous ways, both supporting wellbeing and our natural environment but also in preventative spending. UNISON's series of Damage reports has highlighted the impact of austerity cuts to services such as environmental health and warned that fewer inspectors/inspections can lead to increases in fly tipping or other pollution of various kinds.

The 30 July letter to the Committee from Roseanna Cunningham, Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform, refers to important work by SNH, the National Parks, Scottish Water, Scottish Canals and others on a range of good initiatives, including the development of 'Our Natural Health Service' by SNH and other public sector partners. We welcome this sort of work and the various research investment programmes referred to, but want to see more, indeed a step change, to reflect and comply with the need for urgent action across portfolios, with the public sector leading, including in reducing their own emissions.

It was disappointing that Ms Cunningham's letter did not refer, even in passing, to the Just Transition approach, which we would see sitting not just with the economy portfolio, but with her portfolio, and with clear relevance across government. If the Scottish Government is truly committed to Just Transition, we would expect to see wide-ranging references to the importance of ensuring that the transition to a zero-carbon economy plans properly for protecting workers' livelihoods, creating a new industrial base and delivering a fairer Scotland.

Key to this is linking it to a strong industrial strategy, making climate change action a major remit of the Scottish National Investment Bank, and more ambition than is currently proposed for the possibilities for a Scottish publicly owned energy company. As the JTP says, the best option for competing commercially and driving energy transition involves generation and transmission as well as supply.

In terms of preventative spending for the benefit of the economy, we urge the Committee to support the Just Transition Commission being much more than a short-life advisory group. The scale of the problem in terms of tackling climate change is so enormous and so important that the Commission must be statutory and long-term, as called for by the Just Transition Partnership. Support for Just Transition is, as the Committee knows, an important part of the Paris Agreement.

Scotland's economy, in particular its oil and gas sector, must plan for this Just Transition from fossil fuels. We must prevent any repetition of communities and families and local economies being devastated by closures such as happened with the rundown of the coal mining industry. For the sake of the economy and the workers involved, their livelihoods and their health, Just Transition must be at the heart of the Scottish Government's plans, with trade union involvement central to the work of the Commission.