

Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Bill - MSP Briefing for Stage 1

Background

[Consumer Scotland](#) is the statutory body for consumers in Scotland. Established by the Consumer Scotland Act 2020, we are accountable to the Scottish Parliament.

The Scottish Parliament will consider the general principles of the *Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Bill* on 10 October. Consumer Scotland provided [written evidence](#) to the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee's pre-legislative scrutiny call for evidence.

Consumer Scotland broadly supports the proposed move to a 5-yearly carbon budget approach. However, there is a need for the Scottish and UK Governments to increase both the urgency and the scale of their response to climate change. This includes taking significant further action to support consumers to understand their role and to create an enabling environment where it is easier for consumers to make the changes which are being asked of them.

We note that the 5-yearly carbon budget approach has been recommended by the Climate Change Committee (CCC). If the Scottish Government waits for planned detailed advice from the CCC before setting carbon budgets, it is essential that action on climate issues does not slow down or stop in the meantime.

Moving to 5-yearly carbon budget approach may present a clearer picture of progress for governments, consumers and businesses. Although annual targets allow regular scrutiny of progress, they are highly vulnerable to year-to-year emissions fluctuations. Potential advantages of aligning the proposed 5-yearly Scottish carbon budgets with the periods of UK carbon budgets include improved consistency in planning, budgeting and consultation periods, which may support a more coherent landscape for consumers.

Regular, transparent progress reports will be key to ensuring that there is no loss of momentum and that all relevant stakeholders, including consumers, remain well informed. The new legislative framework should be treated as a fresh opportunity to engage consumers, business and public bodies.

There is a need for the Scottish and UK Governments to increase both the urgency and the scale of their response to climate change. [Research](#) by Consumer Scotland

has found that consumer concern about climate change is high, with 76% of consumers in Scotland saying that they are either 'very' or 'fairly' concerned about this. However, only 28% of respondents said they know a lot/completely about what they need to do to help Scotland reach net zero by 2045.

While more than half (52%) of respondents to our survey research stated that they are very/somewhat likely to change their purchasing behaviour in the next year as a result of environmental concerns, only 10% of respondents stated they were very likely to do so. **This demonstrates the need for significant further action to support consumers to understand the role they are being asked to play and to take more sustainable actions.**

Consumers are seeking clearer leadership and guidance to help them to make the choices that will help to tackle climate change. A majority (63%) of respondents ranked the UK Government and the Scottish Government (60%) as most responsible for reducing emissions.

The next Climate Change Plan will play a crucial role in outlining and communicating targets and priorities and letting consumers, businesses and public bodies know what is expected of them across a number of sectors. It will be important for carbon budgets to have a cross-sector focus. **There is a need for more emphasis on system-level design that takes into account the full consumer journey** and which considers issues such as regulation, supply chains and skills, along with consumer protection and redress in newly developing markets from an early stage. Behaviour change models, like ISM, can also help support interventions to remove barriers to consumer action.

A new Climate Change Plan, backed by new legislation, will be key to providing the necessary support to consumers. It is important that the Plan is detailed, credible, robust and commits to tangible measures, backed by fully costed budget commitments, which can be delivered within the relevant timeframe. Our [research](#) found that many consumers primarily value convenience, cost and quality when making purchasing decisions. **It is important that the Climate Change Plan sets out a clear, system-led approach, which takes into account the range of factors which have an impact on consumer decisions.**

The Plan will need to take account of issues around regulation, supply chains, skills development, technological change, infrastructure development, funding and consumer protection and redress.

Consumer Scotland supports the Bill, however **there is a need for significant further action to support consumers to understand how they can take action to support the transition to net zero.** The next Climate Change Plan can assist in this and **it is vital that the next Climate Change Plan is published as soon as possible after carbon budgets have been agreed.**