



A Fair COP:

Citizens Advice Scotland's research work in the run up to COP26

This year the eyes of the world will be upon Glasgow for COP26, as parties and delegates try to accelerate action towards climate change.

Citizens Advice Scotland supports Net Zero, but we want to see a just transition which creates good quality jobs and doesn't increase the burden on the poorest consumers. Net Zero must also be tangible and accessible to the poorest consumers.

This theme has run through much of our policy and research work in the run up to COP26.

Energy Efficiency and the Private Rented Sector



In Scotland, 14% of all homes are privately-rented. The private rented sector has below average standards of repair and energy efficiency, having both the greatest proportion of properties with low SAP ratings and those failing to meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard.

CAS undertook research to understand the issues faced by the sector and what needs to be done to improve the energy efficiency of Scotland's private rented housing stock. Our report of our findings makes a series of recommendations as to how housing in the private rented sector can be improved to provide tenants with warmer, better quality homes while reducing emissions as Scotland moves towards Net Zero.

Small business and energy



Small and Medium-sized Enterprises are the lifeblood of Scotland's economy and will play a major role in Scotland's transition to Net Zero. CAS prepared a research paper on their options in, and attitude towards, energy. The [paper](#) provides a baseline for SME engagement with the decarbonisation agenda and energy market, on which future research and engagement can be built.

Consumer Attitudes to Net Zero



The CAS Fair Markets team published polling around consumer attitudes towards Net Zero alongside a [briefing paper](#) which summarised the results.

The polling revealed that 68% of Scottish adults support moves towards Net Zero by 2045, with 41% believing that reducing the impact of climate change should become more of a priority for the Scottish Government following the COVID-19 crisis.

External Work on Climate Issues in the Year of COP26

Meanwhile, 59% thought making homes more energy efficient should be prioritised in the Scottish Government's climate response.

However, understanding of the impact of the measures required to meet Net Zero were low, with 65% having no identifiable energy efficiency measures or renewable technologies installed in their home.

Only 17% believe that reducing water usage should be a priority, despite the fact that water heating accounts for 5% of all UK carbon emissions - the same amount as the aviation industry.

90% were not aware that most homes and businesses would need to replace their gas heating systems with an alternative source of heating, like heat pumps, if Scotland were to reduce its reliance on 'blue' hydrogen to meet its climate change commitments. (Blue hydrogen is created from fossil fuel sources, where the carbon emissions are captured and stored. Green hydrogen is made from non-fossil sources).

Respondents were also asked what might concern them if they were considering installing a low carbon heating system. Cost was the biggest concern, with 67% concerned about high up-front costs and 55% concerned about higher energy bills.

Heat Networks Bill



Earlier this year Scotland became the first country in the UK to legislate to support the growth of heat networks, through which clusters of homes and businesses get heating from a central source rather than individual fossil fuel boilers - making it safer for customers and more efficient. It is estimated that heat networks will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by the equivalent of 90,000 cars by 2050 and generate annual fuel cost savings of around £130 for every household that connects to a heat network. Following extensive engagement by CAS the principles of community engagement and 'just transition' were included on the face of the bill.

Fuel Poverty and Reaching Net Zero



As part of Challenge Poverty Week on 5 October, the CAS Fair Markets team hosted a well-attended roundtable on Net Zero and fuel poverty. This stakeholder-focused event featured extensive discussion around the ways tackling fuel poverty and reaching Net Zero can be delivered in tandem, the practical challenges in reaching these goals, and the scope for potential partnership opportunities in this space.

External Work on Climate Issues in the Year of COP26

World Water Day



This year on World Water Day our Policy Team Manager Gail Walker wrote a piece on society's relationship to water and how we use it. This piece, which included addressing the relationship between society, water and climate, ran on the website of [Hydro Nation International Centre](#) and was followed up with a more public facing version in [the Herald](#).

Election Manifestos



In the runup to the May 2021 elections CAS launched our own [manifesto](#) that included climate-focused measures such as investing in achieving an EPC rating of C for all homes in Scotland by 2030 and protecting the least resilient households in the low carbon transition. As part of this work CAS engaged with all the major political parties in an attempt to get them to commit to supporting our specific asks in these areas.

Scottish Government's Heat in Buildings Strategy



The Citizens Advice Scotland energy policy team drafted and submitted a [consultation response](#) to the Scottish Government's draft Heat in Building Strategy on behalf of the Energy Consumers Commission. The Energy Consumers Commission formed in July 2020 and consists of representatives with a wealth of experience in national consumer advocacy, advice bodies, academia, and local groups serving energy consumers in their communities. CAS has played, and continues to play, a leading role in the Commission's attempts to deliver a pathway to Net Zero that benefits the climate and the citizens we represent. To support this CAS also produced a briefing for stakeholders outlining our key priorities in relation to the Heat in Buildings Strategy.

Equality of Opportunity and Personal Plans for Net Zero



As part of our weekly column in the Herald CAS published three pieces on the drive to Net Zero. The [first of these](#) by Kate Morrison drew on CAS research and policy to show the need for Scotland's transition to Net Zero to be delivered in a way that benefits all and does not come at the expense of vulnerable groups; on the contrary, it can deliver great opportunities if the correct support is provided. In September, Grace Remington [highlighted](#) a number of ways individual consumers can help Scotland's Net Zero ambitions and signposted the support that is currently available. And in October, Alastair Wilcox wrote a [further piece](#) about how protecting people from fuel poverty goes hand in hand with promoting better energy efficiency and the adoption of low carbon heating in our homes.