

The Scottish Women's Convention's
response to the Scottish Government's
consultation on:

Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan



May 2023

Premise

The Scottish Government have made multiple commitments to reduce Scotland's carbon footprint. As such they have recognised that reducing and changing the way in which we consume energy could assist in meeting these targets. The proposed plans, the Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan, set out the vision for Scotland's energy system to 2042 and a route map of ambitions and actions.

To assess the validity of these plans, they have requested that organisations and individuals consider multiple questions relating to the reduction in energy usage in Scotland. They have also queried whether minority groups, or those with protected characteristics will be unfairly impacted by these plans.

After the Scottish Government have received consultation responses, they shall consider alterations that are required and rectify their plan accordingly – incorporating suggestions made.



The Scottish Women's Convention (SWC)

The SWC is funded to engage with women across Scotland to ensure that their views are represented in policy and decision-making processes. The SWC uses the views of women to respond to a variety of parliamentary, governmental, and organisational consultation papers at Scottish, UK, and international levels.

The SWC gathers information using different methods, including roadshows, thematic conferences, surveys, and both in-person and online roundtable events. This submission presents the views of a range of women, reflecting their opinions, ideas and lived experience. Working together with many other equalities organisations and community groups, we use our broad network to ensure that women from a range of backgrounds are heard and acknowledged. We are continually reviewing innovative ways of engaging with women and developing our trauma-informed and culturally sensitive practice to support vital contributions from as many women as possible.

Preparing for a Just Energy Transition

How can we ensure our approach to supporting community energy is inclusive and that the benefits flow to communities across Scotland?

Community energy projects provide a good opportunity for rural Scottish communities to further develop their energy options. These areas face harsh winters, and due to poor transport links, fuel deliveries can be irregular. As such, women from these areas have expressed interest in developing community energy projects, particularly renewable energy options. They highlighted that by having wind and/or solar options in place reliable energy is more likely, which could benefit the local community, cut costs, and provide jobs through the repair and maintenance of technology.

- “Well, we have the turbines and that gets fed back into the grid, but we don’t really see a direct impact. It would be good to have a self-sustaining island, where we could make our own energy, and anything extra could be fed into the grid.”
- “They [wind turbines] feed back into the national grid, but I’m not sure how we see the benefit. This kind of thing is indirect. What I want is a government driven initiative to help small communities have their own turbine, that would supply our own homes and be off grid.”

With regards to job creation however, it is key that the Scottish Government provide good quality local education for people from the Islands and Highlands in the renewable energy sector. At the moment, islanders explained that for repair and installation professionals come from the mainland, rather than locals having this expertise. Women stated that by offering practical apprenticeships, Scottish islands could become self-sustainable, which is particularly crucial during harsher winter months. It would also be valuable, if the Scottish Government ran initiatives to encourage young women from the islands to take part in these projects, with current levels of women in STEM being low. By targeting young women, the Scottish Government could ensure that community energy is more inclusive, and benefits could be felt across rural communities.

- “They are really going to have to push the apprenticeships for the renewables in such a small place, there’s not a single person who is trained in it. They need to offer more apprenticeships in these rural places, they need to train the kids, they’re capable”
- “We need more women and girls in technology, engineering, science, etc. in STEM.”

Energy Demand – Energy for Transport

What action can the Scottish Government take to ensure that the transition to a net zero transport system supports those least able to pay.

Moves towards net zero transport are admirable, with aims such as this being vital in reducing the devastating impact of climate change. Women are generally less likely to make use of active transport options, such as walking and cycling, which would assist in reducing energy use, as they feel unsafe and vulnerable in public places. They have cited a lack of lighting in parks, poor surveillance, and bad town planning, preventing them from exploring their own communities and neighbourhoods. This is further hindered by poor pavements, particularly in rural areas, which greatly limit women from actively travelling. Women have explained that a lack of surfaces force them to walk on roads, and this is significantly more difficult when pushing prams or if an individual has mobility issues. They have stated that despite calls to become more active, the infrastructure is not in place, and therefore they have little choice but to use private vehicles. Therefore, by implementing feminist planning methods across Scottish towns and cities, the Scottish Government could encourage more women to utilise active travel options as they would feel safer. This approach would also create a more joined-up approach across transport which would be particularly useful for those who are less able to pay for alternative transport or have specialised requirements.

- “Spaces must be made to accommodate women’s specific needs, safety, security, etc.”
- “Better cycling infrastructure would help me a lot.”
- “We need better lighting, urban design and more populated spaces”
- “They are telling us to get more active by walking, but we don’t have any safe paths. Also, we get lots of people visiting to cycle on the island – but no cycling routes? That just means there’s more likely to be an accident.”

This freedom of movement is further limited by generally poor public transport, with many women feeling that buses and trains are irregular and overpriced. Recent proposals made by the First Minister to remove on-peak train prices will be invaluable for commuters and aligns with the wants of women in Scotland. However, those using buses will not experience similar financial relief – with private bus companies regularly increasing prices. Those using bus services are more likely to be in low-paid work, and as such are less able to pay for these soaring costs. It is imperative that the Scottish Government consider how they can implement better quality public transport for the people of Scotland, and how they can incorporate affordability into these offerings to reach their net zero targets.

Impact Assessment Questions

Could any of the proposals set out in this strategy unfairly discriminate against any person in Scotland who shares a protected characteristic?

Due to the lack of mention of women and minority groups across this strategy it can be said that it is inherently flawed. In order to properly consider those with protected characteristics it would be valuable to consult with these groups throughout, and also

consider in what ways they can be integrated into energy plans for the future. Women are not widely represented across STEM sectors, and as such further investment into this sector, should occur alongside increasing numbers of women filling STEM posts. Women are consistently leaving high school with higher grades than their male counterparts but are less likely to enter the full-time workplace due to structural issues, such as low pay and a lack of childcare facilities/options. If the Scottish Government are eager to address the gender inequality that is obvious across STEM, it is vital that these practical barriers are lifted through comprehensive policy. We would therefore recommend that an all-encompassing approach to equality impact assessments should be carried out and that the gendered nature of society is included across planning.

Is there any further action that we, or other organisations (please specify), can take to protect those on lower incomes or are at risk of fuel poverty from any negative cost impact as a result of the net zero transition?

Despite the clear need to reduce carbon emissions in Scotland, the Scottish Government must recognise that this will not be immediate. In the meantime, support should be given to rural communities that still rely on multiple forms of energy, including fossil fuels like oil and coal. Women from these areas have stated that they don't like using these fuel types, as they are aware of their detrimental impact on the environment, however due to the unreliability of national grids and the unpredictable weather, they have little choice but to make use of them. It has been highlighted that the prices of these fossil fuels have only been increasing due to the recent cost of living crisis, and as such rural women are calling for improved help with their energy costs.

- "...it was already an island with massive fuel poverty, extreme fuel poverty."
- "...actually, during the winter there I said to my daughter that she would be in sleeping with me to try and cut fuel costs down and keep warm."
- "They could include oil, domestic oil, in the price cap because it's not fair. We don't have the option of gas. So, if people are being protected that have gas central heating, we don't have that option."

Is there further action we can take to ensure the strategy best supports the developments of more opportunities for young people?

An important step in encouraging more young women into the energy and renewable industry is removing gender stereotypes within schools. Young women have explained to us that they do not feel encouraged to enter STEM careers, with this being highly visible while making their subject choices and seeking employment guidance prior to leaving secondary school. Those that have chosen these subjects are regularly undermined by their classmates, and in some cases teachers. Young women are a vital part of the economic process, with their currently untapped potential in STEM providing a great opportunity in further developing the energy workforce. If the Scottish

Government's Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan was to be expanded to include education-work in schools, highlighting that STEM jobs are great for all children regardless of characteristics, it would go further to achieving its goal of creating an innovative, dynamic workforce for the future of Scotland.

- “There are only two other girls in my tech class...if I'm doing well or something they'll go like 'aw they're just saying that because you're a girl', but I just want to get on with my work.”
- “...when we do share things in class [the boys] assume girls are wrong”
- “There shouldn't be gender stereotypes in subjects.”

Conclusion

Having listened to women, our three key recommendations on this topic are:

- Work within education settings to challenge gender stereotypes which limit young girls from entering STEM careers.
- Provide increased financial support for those living in rural communities reliant on fossil fuels throughout the development of plans.
- Incorporate feminist town planning into transport infrastructure development across Scotland to meet net zero targets.

The SWC is grateful for the opportunity to respond to the Scottish Government's consultation on **Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan**. As an organisation, we will continue to work with women from across Scotland to gather voices and experiences relating to this topic and its effects on women's equality.

For further information or to share your views, please contact:

Email - info@scottishwomensconvention.org

Telephone - 0141 339 4797

Website – www.scottishwomensconvention.org

Facebook, Twitter & Instagram - @SWCwomen



Scottish Women's Convention is a charitable company limited by guarantee. Registered in Scotland No. SC0327308. Registered office 2nd Floor, The Albany Centre, 44 Ashley Street Glasgow G3 6DS.

The Scottish Women's Convention is a Charity registered in Scotland No. SC039852.