

A Glasgow City Council spokesperson said:

“Glasgow City Council, alongside its partners, have made significant progress in tackling the climate emergency. We announced in August the reduction in citywide carbon emissions by 41 per cent since 2006, surpassing the 30 per cent target set for 2020. We also introduced Glasgow’s climate plan in June, which was passed unanimously and received cross-party support, which underlines how comprehensive Glasgow’s climate plan is. Glasgow City Council understands that tackling the climate emergency will be a considerable undertaking, and there are areas that need to be improved upon as we look to our net-zero carbon target by 2030. However, this report needs to be clearer about how information has been collected and the matrix used to reflect performance. Climate change is a hugely complex matter, and the need for clear benchmarking from reports like these will be crucial if local authorities are to have meaningful discussions with their citizens on how we tackle this emergency.”

Councillor Jenny Laing, Labour leader of Aberdeen City Council, said:

"Aberdeen City Council’s focus since March 2020 has been on responding to Covid-19 and this has been hampered by the Scottish Government’s inability to work collegiately with their various public sector partners. In May 2020 Aberdeen City Council agreed a Net Zero Vision for Aberdeen and an accompanying Infrastructure Plan and in June we established a Net Zero Leadership Board with both public and private sector membership to drive this work forward.”

"It is obvious that councils right across Scotland are being let down by the Scottish Government who introduce net zero legislation and then cut local government funding thereby ensuring that the targets introduced are almost impossible to deliver upon. What we need from the Scottish Government is a lot less rhetoric and a lot more financial support for local councils, so we are all able to play a full part in reducing carbon emissions and work in partnership to achieve the stretching national climate change targets which have been set.”

John Curry, director of infrastructure and environment at Scottish Borders Council, said:

“There is no doubt that all councils across Scotland face an enormous challenge in terms of climate change and we at Scottish Borders Council understand that challenge. Like others, we are building an approach, and understand the scale of everything that is required by 2030.

"There is a need to understand how local authority plans will correlate with national targets and ambition. Care also needs to be taken to ensure that, in an exercise like this, valid comparisons are being made between plans that are trying to do the same things. Councils are at different stages. Our document referred to is a route map, not a detailed action plan, with relevant action being worked up on a priority basis within the framework of the Climate Change Route Map. Therefore, it does not detail sectoral emissions targets, for example.

"One thing is absolutely clear, while the scale of the climate challenge is unprecedented, we are committed to making the necessary changes for the good of our Scottish Borders and for future generations."

Fife Council's service manager, Ross Spalding said:

"We have not been involved in or consulted on this report and it's therefore impossible to comment on the validity of the scores given to Fife.

"As a council we are absolutely committed to tackling climate change with our partners, and a comprehensive action plan is being taken forward. Our targets are ambitious and support from Scottish and UK governments is essential if we are going to meet the challenges we face."

A spokesperson for Argyll and Bute Council said:

"We are committed to helping the drive to tackle the impacts of climate change at local, regional and national levels wherever possible. Since 2014, we have cut the council's carbon emissions, from the use of electricity and gas by 30 per cent and we expect to see a continued fall in emissions.

"Tackling climate change is a key priority for the council and, building on the actions we are already taking through the decarbonisation plan, we will work with our communities and our partners to explore all possible options to tackle the threat which climate change presents."

A spokesperson for Dumfries and Galloway Council said:

"In response to freedom of information and MSP enquiries from Stephen Kerr MSP, we provided a 12 point action plan and route map and methodology for our baseline.

"We have not been copied into the report or seen the outcome or assessment criteria or been involved in any other discussions around our council's approach to

climate change. So we aren't able to comment effectively or objectively on the outcomes of this report.

“We recognise that the current position is challenging and that additional support and input is vital to ensuring that we are best placed to support efforts across our region to tackle climate change.

“It should be noted that the local authority is just one of many stakeholders that need to play an active role in the coming years.”

Andrew Kennedy, head of facilities and property management at East Ayrshire Council, said:

"Our clean green East Ayrshire climate change strategy and action plan, recognises that the pace and scale of change needed to meet the ambitious targets does need a major shift in individual behaviours, organisational action, government policy and investment.

"For this reason we've chosen to focus on four key themes: energy, waste, transport and natural environment. We believe this focus will help everyone in East Ayrshire scrutinise their own environment and behaviours and take the actions needed to create positive change.

"There are some areas where we can make a difference immediately, while other areas will require innovative thinking to create new solutions. That's why we're very excited to be working with Strathclyde University, Scottish Power Energy Networks, the UK and Scottish Governments and many others on our CoRE project (part of the Ayrshire Growth Deal). CoRE participants will actively research and implement an all encompassing plan to create a Net Zero community around Cumnock, harnessing wind, solar, geothermal and hydrogen technologies, coupled with a ground breaking programme of building design and refurbishment to create a low cost, sustainable constant supply of green energy. This will support a just green transition, bringing jobs, educational and community wealth building opportunities to the area.

"We've launched our clean green East Ayrshire climate change strategy and action plan, held our second young people's climate change conference, and are currently holding a consultation on our strategy to build on our ongoing engagement with young people, communities, businesses and partners.

"We aim build on the COP26 legacy, adapting, developing and learning from across local government and other sectors as we work together with our communities to

tackle climate change. In signing up to the UK100 we are committed to do all we can to become a Net Zero council by 2030 and Net Zero over all East Ayrshire by 2045."

Dundee City Council highlighted recent announcements:

https://www.dundeeecity.gov.uk/news/article?article_ref=4058

"More than £3.3m of investment to address climate change, including a programme of energy conservation measures, installation of additional EV chargers and the purchase of new electric vehicles and plant, is set to be discussed by councillors...."

https://www.dundeeecity.gov.uk/news/article?article_ref=4056

"Detailed plans for Dundee's Low Emission Zone could be finalised next week and move to the next stage if councillors back the blueprint...."

The council agreed those two items on 25 October 2021.

https://www.dundeeecity.gov.uk/news/article?article_ref=4036

"Major declarations demonstrating Dundee's ongoing commitment to tackling climate change have been signed by city leaders..."

Councillor Jim Thomson, SNP environment spokesperson on Stirling Council, said:

"This report is hardly independent since its authors are well known Tory activists or researchers acting on behalf Stephen Kerr. It is not a neutral report and is little more than an exercise to kick local government, who at a time of Tory austerity are working hard to help save our planet.

"No effort whatsoever was made by the authors to contact me in my capacity as convener, or a member of the climate and nature emergency working group. If they had, they would have discovered how Stirling council is leading the way on things like solar panels, waste energy recovery and battery energy storage. Much of the information in the report does not stand up to scrutiny.

"This is typical of the Tories, ignore the facts and repeat often."

North Ayrshire Council's Labour leader, councillor Joe Cullinane, said:

“This is the most ludicrous report I’ve ever read. Have we reached the point where Tory MSPs are able to make up their own research and present it as an authoritative voice on an issue as important as climate change?”

“A report on climate action which is based on Tory Party researchers assessing the responses to a set of self-compiled questions, which include whether a local authorities climate plan sets out options for HGV vehicles in council estates, is worthless.

“Can I now create my own scoring matrix to assess the performance of Tory MSPs and present it as the definitive analysis of their work?”

“As the Council’s statement demonstrates, we have been a trailblazing Council that is already retrofitting our homes with Solar PV, have approved two council-owned Solar Farms and are pioneering Community Wealth Building. Our climate action makes a mockery of this piece of Tory trash they are calling ‘research’.”

A North Ayrshire Council spokesperson said:

“We fundamentally disagree with the findings of this report which has ignored or overlooked the sector-leading work being delivered in North Ayrshire to combat climate change.

“We are extremely disappointed and frustrated to note the report does not take into account all the trail-blazing work the Council is doing on Climate Change and our commitment to achieving net zero status by 2030. It is also hugely disappointing not to have had the opportunity to view the 64 questions and provide informed responses, nor being able to see the results prior to being published. This would have given us the opportunity to address and correct any misleading conclusions.

“We were one of the first local authorities in Scotland to recognise the challenge and declare a climate emergency, we are also the first in Scotland to be developing a solar farm, and have led the way for Scottish local authorities by creating a dedicated Investment Fund to support climate change initiatives, sustainable infrastructure investment and Community Wealth Building. The vast majority of our ground-breaking work has been largely ignored and this is deeply frustrating.”

To highlight the good work that North Ayrshire Council has undertaken which has not been reflected in this report, please see the following examples:

North Ayrshire Council has been active in reducing carbon emissions since our first Carbon Management Plan in 2006. Through work to reduce fossil fuel usage, carbon

emissions across the Council's estate have reduced by 45 per cent. In 2014, the Council published the first North Ayrshire Environmental Sustainability & Climate Change Strategy (ESCCS) 2014-17, setting a vision for sustainability within the authority. The second ESCCS (2017-2020) continued to build on this work and set an ambitious target to reduce carbon emissions. On 11 June, 2019, North Ayrshire Council declared a Climate Emergency, committing to further act on Climate Change and aspire to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2030.

Some examples of achievements and successes delivered through the previous ESCCS and other strategies which have had a positive impact on climate change are given below:

Significant carbon emission reductions equating to 45 per cent reduction since 2005. Successfully securing approximately £10.5million of funding to provide external wall insulation to 2,231 homes through the Home Energy Efficiency Programme: Area Based Scheme to reduce heat loss and subsequent heating requirements. Installing our first low carbon heat networks fuelled by biomass boilers during the redevelopment of two sheltered housing units in Dalry and Stevenston. Up to 22 October, 2021, we have installed solar PV panels on roofs of 437 Council houses, saving tenants approximately £115 per year on energy bills, with a further 210 installations in progress.

Our Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH) performance was 97.6 per cent – the third best performance from a Scottish local authority, demonstrating a strong commitment to ensuring our tenants' properties are energy efficient. Investing nearly £1m in energy efficiency measures such as boiler replacement, LED lighting and enhanced controls to 14 non-domestic properties through the Non-Domestic Energy Efficiency framework.

The Council's operational vehicle fleet now incorporates a number of electric vehicles and a number of low emission vehicles. Our sustainable business travel arrangements and employee car-pool scheme have contributed to a reduction of 1,000,107 miles driven since the pilot began in October 2015. An increasing number of miles actually driven are now being facilitated by the pool of low emission and electric vehicles. This has contributed to a significant carbon emissions reduction. Installing a number of publicly accessible electric vehicle charge points to support and encourage the uptake of electric vehicles across North Ayrshire.

The Council continues to be one of the highest performing for household waste recycling in Scotland with 56.3 per cent achieved for 2019 (greater than the national rate of 44.9 per cent) and have developed a Plastic Waste Prevention Plan to support North Ayrshire Council's ambition to become a 'Plastic Free Council' by 2022.

Working as part of the Clyde Valley Residual Waste Partnership to establish a 25-year project, delivering a solution to divert waste from landfill following the closure of Shewalton landfill site in March 2018. The solution recovers additional recyclates with the remaining non-recyclable waste delivered to a new Energy Recovery Facility to recover heat and produce electricity from the waste.

Working in partnership with third sector organisations on Arran and the mainland to progress Circular Economy opportunities on the island.

In recognising the need to continually tackle climate change, and to achieve the ambitious target of becoming net-zero carbon emissions by 2030, North Ayrshire Council dedicated an £8.8m Investment Fund at its budget setting meeting in 2020 to support climate change, sustainable infrastructure investment and Community Wealth Building.

Part of this investment (£500,000) was specifically allocated to tree planting in order to remove carbon emissions from the atmosphere. The investment Fund was increased to £10.2m in total at the Council's budget setting meeting held in March 2021. On 16 December, 2020, the Council approved the HRA Capital Investment Programme of £109.756m for 2021/22, which includes £5m investment in regeneration projects and sustainability measures, to reduce fuel poverty. In January 2021, the Council approved the development of two solar PV farms to reduce North Ayrshire's carbon footprint and help us to become one of the first local authorities in the country to reach net-zero carbon emissions within the next decade. Together the solar farms will see almost two thirds of the Council's energy needs provided through the Council's own renewable energy production, they will reduce our CO2 emissions by over 850 tonnes per year. Being developed on former derelict land at Nethermains and Shewalton, the solar PV farms will help reduce fuel poverty and through community benefits associated with the installation, will provide funding for local community projects.

In May 2021, our Cabinet approved the third Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy (ESCCS).

The Strategy takes account of emerging intelligence and new technology opportunities and provides a roadmap of actions to achieve net-zero carbon status across North Ayrshire by 2030. Our strategy contains seven workstreams, each with actions which have been developed into a roadmap illustrating how net-zero carbon status will be achieved by 2030.

The workstreams are:

1. Affordable Warmth

2. A Green Economy
3. Transport & Travel
4. Natural Environment
5. Sustainable Operations
6. Emissions Absorption
7. Climate Change Adaptation

The information on the ESCCS 2021-2023 and link to the document was provided to the report authors in the response.

On 19 August, 2021, the ESCCS 2021-2023 was launched, with four expert panel speakers talking discussing green recovery, community climate change/adaptation activities, low carbon technologies and youth response to the climate emergency. It was a very successful event with over 3,500 views on Facebook. The link to the event can be found below.

<https://www.facebook.com/northayrshireofficial/videos/35888382255579/>

We have also established a North Ayrshire-wide Climate Change Steering group to ensure North Ayrshire can achieve the net zero target and develop a leading approach to climate change for the whole area. The group brings together partners - such as the NHS, Ayrshire College, Police Scotland and Scottish Fire and Rescue – as well as young people, local businesses and community organisations to share ideas, lessons learned and best practice from elsewhere in the UK, and support and challenge the implementation of the ESCCS 2021-2023.

The action above demonstrate our commitment to meet the net zero carbon target by 2030 and combat climate change.

We are more than happy to provide a direct response to the 64 questions which we were being scored on, as we believe our good performance is evidenced within the strategic documents provided to the report authors. It is our opinion, the scores do not reflect our capability to meet targets to combat climate change.

For example, question 52 around a quantified plan for further EV infrastructure roll out, North Ayrshire Council was only scored 2 out of 5 (where 0 means no mention was made of a topic, 3 means there were gaps but they could get on track with support and 5 means the issue was being competently addressed). In the response sent, we provided a link to our recently approved and published EV Strategy 2021-2025 which clearly sets out our plan and quantified targets:

By December 2025 we aim to have

- one publicly accessible charge point for every nine Plug in Vehicles
- 2 per cent of total number of vehicles registered in North Ayrshire to be Plug in Vehicles
- installed 80 workplace charge sockets (44 workplace chargers with varying number of outlets)

A further example would be the Resource Use section. It appears that North Ayrshire Council has been omitted from this section and our approach to waste management has not been considered, even though North Ayrshire Council's Zero Waste Strategy 2018-2022 was included in our response. With regards to this topic there is a question around statistics on recycling and our third ESCCS clearly highlights:

The Council has successfully delivered an enhanced waste and recycling service, allowing for 61.2 per cent of all household waste to be recycled, and realising 6.22 per cent recovery of energy from waste collected in 2019/20.

North Ayrshire Council has established a 25-year project to divert waste from landfill and generate energy, through the Clyde Valley Residual Waste Project. Partnering with four other local authorities up to 190,000 tonnes of municipal waste will be diverted from landfill and converted to low carbon energy on an annual basis.