

# BUILDING A LEGACY FROM COP26

Net Zero, Holistic Climate  
Action and Nature-Based  
Solutions



Green  
Action  
Trust



## FOREWORD

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In the vast amount of discussion and debate in the lead-up to COP26, attention has rightly moved beyond theory of climate change to the practical steps we can take to mitigate and halt the damage we are inflicting on our planet.

Often in public policy, these individual steps seem to be just that - individual steps. It's encouraging to now see that at every turn, whether it is in thinking on town centre regeneration, or sustainable transport initiatives, whether in green space development or action on vacant and derelict land, that climate change and environmental priority is baked in.

This is a journey that the Green Action Trust has been on for years - not least in our delivery of the Central Scotland Green Network Plan on behalf of the Scottish Government, one of the largest green infrastructure projects in Europe. Yet, what is genuinely exciting now, is the clear recognition that however valuable the steps we have been taking thus far, bigger and faster strides are required.

As a key environmental regeneration partner of Government, the Green Action Trust knows the difference that can be made in urban (and often deprived) communities, just as much as across wider rural Scotland through environmental regeneration. Whether city centre or remote and rural, our nation needs an accelerated expansion of nature and environment-friendly infrastructure as Scotland plots its green recovery from Covid-19 and works towards Net Zero targets.

Our charity is at the forefront of that work, but does so in recognition that there is much more to do across the country. It's a critical national endeavour to meet Net Zero. To do so requires every organisation - business, third sector and government - to play its part. That's why I'm very grateful to industry leaders such as the SCDI for spearheading work amongst organisations across Scotland to consider practical preparedness for Net Zero.

With Scotland playing host to leaders from across the globe to discuss this vital issue, there is no better time for all of us - from the individual grassroots through to large corporations - to ask ourselves what more we can do to play an active role in solving our climate crisis. That is how we can secure a legacy from COP26.

# HOW PREPARED ARE WE FOR NET ZERO?

A survey of SCDI members and Productivity Club Scotland members was carried out in October 2021 on the preparedness of organisations for Net Zero.

Responses were received from 64 organisations, so whilst not statistically representative of the whole Scottish business community, what the results do infer is that there is an awareness of Net Zero amongst private, public and third sector organisations of all sizes.

**However, across the majority of respondent organisations, further assistance is required to prepare for and meet Net Zero targets.**

- Of the organisations that answered the survey 40% knew their carbon footprint whilst the majority (53%) didn't.
- Only just over a third (36%) of businesses felt their organisation was ready for the transition to net zero whilst 45% felt that their organisation wasn't ready. This was even though 58% had previously reviewed their net zero plans.
- Despite this, almost two thirds (64%) of organisations felt that COP26 would be very important or quite important for their organisation with 63% suggesting that the conference would lead to a review of their net zero plans.
- 36% of organisations had been able to find and access the relevant advice and support they need for net zero whilst a further 13% had the information needed but had yet to act on it suggesting that for almost half of all businesses a lack of knowledge isn't the main barrier.
- However, 32% of organisations did not know where to look for guidance, whilst a further 6% felt the right options for them were not available.

The findings are consistent with SCDI's policy recommendations for [Building Scotland's Green Recovery](#) which call for expanded green stimulus and national programmes of investment in practical action including Nature-Based Solutions, green jobs and reskilling, green town and city plans and environmental conditionality on business support. Similarly, [SCDI's Manifesto for Clean Growth](#) – published alongside a number of public, private and third sector partners – recommended actions across industry, energy, connectivity, place, people, finance and nature to underpin Scotland's transition to Net Zero through innovation.



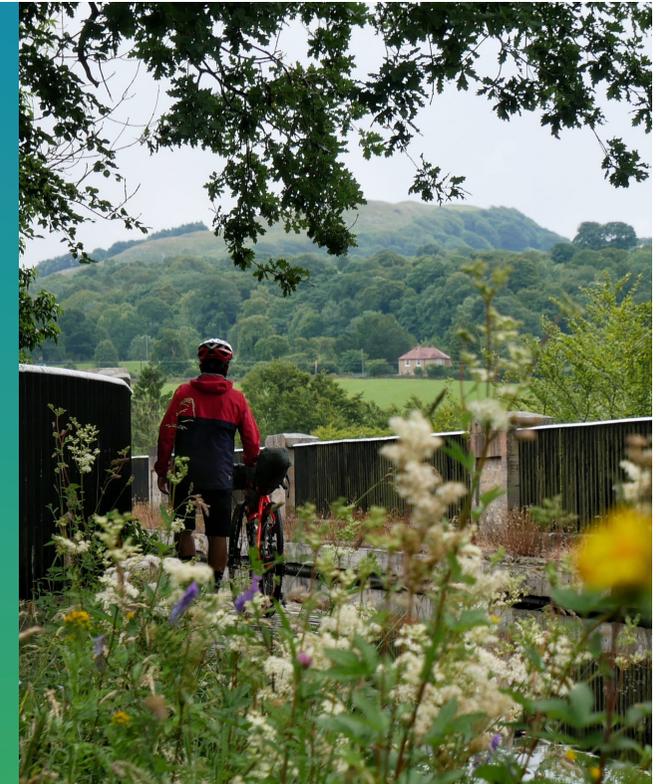
# PROGRESSING TOWARDS NET ZERO

## DERYCK IRVING, DIRECTOR OF STRATEGY AND DEVELOPMENT

There are two overarching approaches to achieving Net Zero: the adoption of business models (for organisations) and the adoption of lifestyles (for individuals) which reduce carbon emissions as much as possible.

These will involve a wide range of evaluations, decisions and changes – such as:

- How and where we choose to live and work
- How we heat and cool buildings
- How we use and re-use resources such as land and water
- How we design new buildings and retrofit/renovate old ones
- How we travel and how we transport goods
- The materials that are used to create products, buildings, and infrastructure
- Our purchasing decisions and supply chains
- Our use of digital media – even the internet has a carbon footprint.



This must include an assessment of indirect emissions as well direct emissions. We cannot move to Net Zero by pushing our carbon emissions to other countries (through manufacturing and distribution, for example) or to other people.

The next step of the approach is to offset those carbon emissions which cannot be fully eliminated. The [UN Carbon Offset Platform](#) describes offsetting as:

*'a climate action that enables individuals and organizations to compensate for the emissions they cannot avoid, by supporting worthy projects that reduce emissions somewhere else'.*

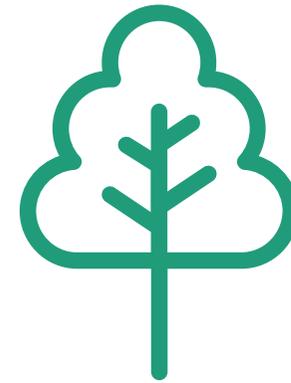
The platform identifies three types of actions that are supported by offsetting initiatives:



**Replace**



**Reduce**



**Capture**

- **Replacing** the use of dirty fossil fuels with clean renewable energy (wind, hydro, solar, biomass).
- **Reducing** energy consumption and the use of fossil fuels through energy efficiency measures (clean cooking stoves, energy efficient light bulbs).
- **Capturing** already released carbon in trees and other plants (reforestation and forest regeneration projects).

Offsetting is a key element of the concept of Net Zero. We are seeing a significant demand for greater woodland creation in Scotland as part of this drive to offset emissions. Other Scottish action supported by offsetting includes the rollout of renewable energy technologies, and peatland restoration, which reduces emissions of carbon from degraded peat soils.

# CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION IN SCOTLAND

Climate change policy is an area where Scotland can rightly claim to be a world leader.

For some time, the symbiotic nature of the twin emergencies in climate and biodiversity has been recognised. This is due in no small part to the Scottish Government connecting these agendas and addressing them together wherever possible.

Equally important is the commitment to deliver a Just Transition to Net Zero – ensuring that the benefits of climate change action are shared widely, while the costs do not unfairly burden those least able to pay, or whose livelihoods are directly or indirectly at risk. This is a key component of delivering a greener, fairer and flourishing Scotland but also reflects the country's global responsibilities.

Finally, all Government policy is strongly place-based – looking to deliver solutions in a way which takes account of local need and minimises the impact of geographical and organisational boundaries.

Climate change action is, however, an area where there is still much to be achieved. Laudable policy aspirations and commitments to accelerated action do not always translate through to delivery in practice. Achieving net zero – and even preparing for it – is a complex process, and yet it is easy to over-simplify the perceived solutions.



# WHAT IS REQUIRED?

A single focus on reducing emissions could, for example, lead to a Scotland where buildings and transport systems are exemplary but where the wider environment is still deteriorating and where the places where we live and work are not conducive to individual or societal wellbeing.

Instead, we need to develop and support approaches to achieving Net Zero which demonstrably deliver on:



## Climate adaptation

It is not all about reducing our activities which drive climate change; we also need to address the impacts of climate change which is already happening - this will make our places and communities more resilient and successful.



## Biodiversity and nature loss

Reversing the decline in species and the degrading of key habitats and bringing people into closer contact with nature.



## Environmental and climate justice

Reducing the current environmental disadvantage experienced by many communities and ensuring that both the costs and benefits of action are fairly distributed.



## Supporting public health and wellbeing

Quality greenspace can assist all of us in improving our health, wellbeing, and overall quality of life.



## Creating successful places

Places where people want to live and work, and places which support our new post-Covid priorities and work patterns.



## Generating a greener, fairer recovery

Moving to economic models which can deliver prosperity within the constraints of a single planet and which capture the opportunities offered by new and existing green technologies.

# INCENTIVISING PLACE-BASED CHANGE

Often the onus is on individuals and organisations to change what they do. But incentive is also required to empower change.

Incentive and investment streams are still too separate, and it is difficult to find a means to resource and support truly multifunctional action. This means that proposals are adapted, realigned and reprioritised to fit the funding streams which are available and elements are lost or under-delivered. This can be exacerbated by the need to engage with agencies and sections of Government with relatively narrow areas of activity or with priorities that overlap but do not clearly interconnect. We need greater alignment and integration of both investment and support mechanisms.

It is reassuring to see that these concerns are being addressed through the Scottish Government's greater focus on place-based investment – taking a multifunctional approach to enable people to live more sustainably by situating services more locally, boosting active travel, repurposing land and buildings, and supporting community resilience.



# NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS AS PART OF A SUCCESSFUL MULTIFUNCTIONAL APPROACH

As described by [NatureScot](#), Nature-Based Solutions:

*"Use nature to help tackle environmental and social challenges, providing benefits to people and nature, and help us to mitigate and adapt to climate change".*

Nature-Based Solutions are multifunctional, and can deliver:

- Carbon capture and sequestration through woodland and wetland creation
- Carbon offsetting through peatland restoration and other habitat management
- Climate adaptation in relation to flood risk management, urban air temperatures and air quality
- Local food growing opportunities – reducing food miles and carbon, developing local economies
- Biodiversity – increasing the connectivity and cohesion of nature networks; reversing species and habitat loss and giving people better access to nature
- Developing more sustainable buildings and neighbourhoods – with energy savings linked to heating and cooling buildings, and renewable energy generation opportunities
- Green Active Travel routes – reducing carbon emissions relating to journeys and supporting greater physical activity
- Public health and wellbeing benefits both by providing space for active recreation and through creating opportunities to connect with the natural world – an asset of huge value, particularly since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic
- Placemaking and regeneration – creating places which are attractive to visit, live and work in – powering local economies.

Nature-Based Solutions alone are not the solution to everything we are trying to achieve, but they are an incredibly important part of any Net Zero 'toolkit' and they are one of the most direct ways of delivering multifunctional solutions. Any long-term plan that does not include Nature-Based Solutions is unlikely to succeed. The challenge is to find the right times, places and ways to use Nature-Based Solutions in combination with other tools, techniques and approaches.

# HOW CAN THE GREEN ACTION TRUST HELP YOU IN YOUR ROUTE TO NET ZERO?

The Green Action Trust has an experienced and skilled team and wider associate network who can assist you to:



- Explore your challenges and opportunities for action
- Develop climate action programmes which are targeted on both Net Zero and your wider commitments and aspirations
- Design, develop and deliver programmes and projects – particularly those related to environmental regeneration and Nature-Based Solutions – converting ideas and opportunities into action on the ground
- Find the resources needed to deliver your planned activities
- Monitor and evaluate the impact of your actions.

# CASE STUDY

## CLIMATE ADAPTATION PROJECTS



We have considerable experience in developing climate adaptation solutions through nature-based action – particularly in relation to water and flood risk. This includes work in the Inner Forth, riparian woodland creation/management and the development and leadership of the 10,000 Raingardens for Scotland programme.

The pilot for this programme was carried out with community partners including the Southside Housing Association in Glasgow. The second phase of the programme is being steered by NatureScot, SEPA and Scottish Water. The aim is to develop and deliver multifunctional solutions – creating a series of raingardens which provide surface water management and are also biodiverse community greenspaces.

# CASE STUDY

## CLIMATE WOODLANDS

Green Action Trust has a long track record of woodland creation and management in and around urban Scotland. All our work is planned and designed to deliver multiple benefits including:

- Carbon sequestration
- Biodiversity enhancement through the creation and management of native woodland habitats
- Creating healthy neighbourhoods which support physical activity and provide mental health benefits
- Providing local recreational facilities

We are actively supporting the development of a Clyde Climate Forest by carrying out woodland creation feasibility studies for the key public sector landowners across the project area and replicating this work for local authorities and public agencies elsewhere in central Scotland. We are also planning and creating climate woodland for both public and private sector landowners on a place-by-place basis.



# CASE STUDY

# CLIMATE WOODLANDS



Through the Cart and Killoch native woodland creation project, we are currently working with Glasgow City Council and local communities on the second phase of work to create an attractive woodland edge and greenspace on the fringes of the city at Carmunnock. This builds on the first phase which was delivered in 2020. Once established, the mixed native broadleaf woodland will provide an attractive recreational resource for local people to use and enjoy and be a key asset in the Clyde Climate Forest.

It will also support a rich variety of wildlife, linking into the existing network of habitats, paths and trails already found at Cathkin Braes Country Park. This project also involves the Lost Woods Project, an initiative that engaged all Glasgow Primary School children in growing on oak tree from seed. These seedlings will be planted this autumn, creating the Glasgow Schools Woodland which is part of Glasgow's planned COP26 legacy and will deliver place and educational benefits.

# CONTACT US



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