

Just Transition Platform Case study:

Scotland's approach to ensuring a coordinated, inclusive just transition

Key information

State: Scotland, United Kingdom

Sectoral focus:

Multi-sector (initial work of the Just Transition Commission tackles energy, land use and agriculture, transport, and built environment and construction). **Beginning:** Since 2019

Main activities:

Scrutiny and advice to the Scottish Government; Support in the monitoring and evaluation of climate policies; Stakeholders' consultation.

This case study was prepared by conducting stakeholder interviews and desk research.

Background

Scotland is a global leader in the fight against climate change. In 2009, the Scottish parliament voted the **Climate Change Act** into law, adopting the legally binding objective of reaching net zero by 2045, one of the earliest and most ambitious climate pledges in the world. This commitment aligns with the net zero ambitions of the government in Westminster, which indeed sets the overall framework for climate action in the UK. While the latter includes a pledge to reach climate neutrality by 2050 – thus five years later than Scotland – it also sets demanding intermediate targets, namely, to reduce carbon emissions by 68 % by 2030 and by 77 % by 2035 (compared to 1990 levels)¹. The **Climate Change (Emission Reduction Targets) Act 2019** updates such commitment by laying out short-, medium- and longer-term emissions reduction targets. This framework also

includes statutory annual targets for every year to net zero and demands that an annual report chronicles whether each annual emissions reduction target has been met. The Act also requires the publication of a Climate Change Plan every five years, which is a technical document highlighting the changes needed – at a sectoral level – to move the just transition forward. The plan – which covers 15-year spans – sets out the path to achieve the milestones objectives for 2030, 2040 and 2045. The 2018-2032 version sets out quantitative estimates of the emissions reductions to be achieved in key sectors of the Scottish economy: electricity, buildings, transport, industry, waste and land use, agriculture, and forestry sector. It also reviews the relevant policy initiatives and highlights intervention areas. For example, the building sector – which accounted for 23 % of total emissions in 2018 – should

Regional and Urban Policy

¹ https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-recommits-uk-to-net-zero-by-2050-and-pledges-a-fairer-path-to-achieving-target-to-ease-the-financial-burdenon-british-families#:~:text=The%20UK%20has%20set%20the,target%20of%2077%25%20for%202035

reduce its emissions by 68 % by 2032. This is to be achieved via more stringent regulations on the energy efficiency of buildings and progress towards the decarbonisation of heat.

While Scotland is not part of the EU and has no territories within it that are eligible for the European Commission's Just Transition Mechanism, the Scottish government has itself instituted a EUR 500 million **Just Transition Fund**², set to funnel resources towards a just transition over the next decade. These resources will be used to accelerate the energy transition in Aberdeen and Moray, in the northeast of the country, areas that in the past decades have thrived thanks to oil and gas extraction. The supported initiatives include, for example, the creation of a skills passport for offshore energy workers to foster the transferability of skills from the oil and gas extraction sector towards wind energy production, the promotion of emerging technologies for carbon capture and storage and investments in community projects.

In September 2023, First Minister Humza Yousaf announced his programme for government from 2023 to 2024, outlining the strategic legislative priorities to be pursued over the current parliamentary year. The legislative programme for this period includes bills to introduce more sustainable regulations in the agriculture and housing sectors. Some noteworthy bills from the Government that have already reached parliament concern the circular economy and the protection and effective management of wildlife. One last remarkable development that pertains to this legislature was the institution of a **Cabinet Secretary for** Transport, Net Zero and Just Transition, which elevates the discussion on a green transition to cabinet level. The Cabinet is the main decision-making body of the Scottish government, thus having a dedicated secretary for net zero within it demonstrates the high priority given to the topic and ensures cross-government coordination for climate policy.

Characteristics of the region

Scotland has a large abundance of natural resources, ranging from fertile agricultural land to rich fisheries and from minerals to oil and gas. Indeed, Scotland is an energy-rich territory. Scottish waters encompass large sectors of the North Atlantic and the North Sea, which include the largest oil resources in Western Europe. Accordingly, the fate of many workers (it is estimated that 6 % of the working population in Scotland serves the North Sea Oil industry) is tied to extractive activities and oil production³. Still, the country has a thriving renewable energy industry, with as much as 57 % of all electricity generated in 2021 from renewable sources⁴, especially offshore wind. Concerning the secondary sector, Scotland's production has moved over time from heavy industry (e.g. ship-building) towards lighter, higher value-added activities. The engineering and defence sectors, for example, employ around 30 000 people⁵. Other products of relevance in the Scottish production mix are whisky and textiles (especially wool). To this point, agriculture and cattle farming will also be a key industry to tackle in order to reach net zero. By far the largest sector of employment, however, is that of services. The banking and financial services sector, which is concentrated in the metropolitan areas of Edinburgh and Glasgow, accounts for 220 000 jobs (roughly 8.4 % of employment)⁶. The software economy, meanwhile, accounts for around 45 000 jobs⁷. All in all, with a voluminous service sector and high innovation capabilities both in services (e.g. thriving FinTech landscape) and deep-tech (e.g. electronics in the "Silicon Glen" area), Scotland's economy is well-placed to weather the negative consequences of the green transition. However, crucial bottlenecks - especially about the North Sea Oil and petrochemical industry – remain.

Central framework conditions

In terms of central framework conditions, it is important to realise how the country has already undergone a **process of industrial transition**. Indeed, its history of transition started as far back as the 1980s with the phasing out of coal, largely motivated by increased competition from cheaper fossil fuels. At the time, the de-industrialisation was carried out in a top-down manner, without the consent or engagement of the workers that would be affected. Mining communities faced loss of employment, economic instability, and the erosion of social fabric, the scars of which persist to this day. This negative experience is likely at the base of current just transition efforts, which aim to manage the structural adjustment of the economy to a carbon-free world while improving people's well-being.

² To avoid confusion, it is worth to stress that there is no relation between this Scottish initiative and the Just Transition Fund sponsored by the European Commission.

³ See: <u>https://fullfact.org/economy/sunak-scotland-oil-jobs/</u>

⁴ See: https://www.insider.co.uk/news/renewable-power-generation-increases-scotland-28801530

⁵ See: https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/statistics/2020/05/scotlands-labour-market-people-places-regions-

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⁶ See: https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/statistics/2019/07/growth-sector-statistics/documents/financial-and-business-services/financial-and-business%2BServices%2B-%2BGrowth%2BSector%2BBriefing.docx 7 See Footnote 4

Description of the Just Transition Commission

In 2019, the Scottish Government responded to calls from civil society by establishing the first Just Transition Commission to address the need for a just transition strategy. This inaugural Just Transition Commission crafted 24 recommendations, grouped into various themes, to guide a just transition. These suggestions encompassed both sector-specific and overarching issues and were fully embraced by the Government. Following the 2021 parliamentary elections, the Just Transition Commission was reconstituted with an expanded role: scrutinising and advising on the development of sector-specific just transition plans led by the Scottish Government. The present Commission is composed of 15 members, including researchers, academics, environmental activists, trade union representatives, and industry experts, ensuring a broad spectrum of interests and thus able to provide a thorough examination of the social implications of striving for a net-zero economy.

Type of activities

The Just Transition Commission is an **independent advisory** body. Specifically, the remit it was given by the Scottish Government⁸ encompasses the following activities. First, overarchingly, to assist the Government in the **production of the** key just transition plans by providing scrutiny and advice. The Government is in the process of drafting "skeleton" plans, upon which the Just Transition Commission can build and improve by providing specific recommendations or by pressing officials for more actionable commitments. It is important to underscore that the final versions of the draft plans will be publicly available to facilitate engagement and consultation with all the stakeholders concerned within Scottish society. However, as recognised in the Memorandum of understanding between the Just Transition Commission and the Scottish Government, the Just Transition Commission benefits from a privileged position, and will receive earlier access to the "skeleton" plans as well as a direct communication line with the Ministry. Indeed, there is a shared expectation that the Scottish Government will, at an early stage, proactively engage the Just Transition Commission as it develops Just Transition Plans. At the time of writing, the plans concerning energy, agriculture and land use, building and construction, and transport are in the pipeline⁹.

Second, the Just Transition Commission will aid in the **monitoring and evaluation of these plans and the outcomes** they produce. The expertise of the commissioners and the team that supports them will be used to scout the data landscape for suitable indicators that can be used to monitor progress. The commissioners will also be able to orient data collection efforts in the near future.

Third, the Just Transition Commission is tasked with **undertaking meaningful engagement with local communities**, especially the ones that stand to lose the most from a transition to net zero. This is done through a series of workshops and open town hall meetings where citizens and stakeholders can voice their concerns.

Finally, the Just Transition Commission should publish an **annual report** to reflect on Scotland's progress. On top of this, the Just Transition Commission also plays an advocacy role, seeking to ensure that the deliberations and recommendations of the Just Transition Commission can filter through to the public as well as to other decision-making spaces in Scotland. A useful resource in this respect is the Just Transition Commission's dedicated <u>website</u>, which became operational in the summer of 2023.

Goals and approach

The goal of the Just Transition Commission is to ensure that the Government's action is effective in meeting the emissions **reduction targets**. It is important to note how the ambition of the targets was not set by the Just Transition Commission, but by the Government itself through an act of political will. In terms of the approach, the Just Transition Commission will counsel the Scottish government to ensure that the transition to a net-zero economy is achieved in collaboration with the affected communities, mitigating the possible social tensions and risks involved. For example, with respect to the Transport Plan, initial consultations carried out by the Just Transition Commission revealed the need to reduce car use in a fairly manner. This implies that policies shouldn't penalise isolated communities which, due to lack of infrastructure, require car travel to reach essential goods and services, as would be the case with higher excise taxes on petrol. The Just Transition Commission thus serves an advisory function, and its recommendations build on both sectoral expertise and insights generated at the local level.

⁸ Note that, while the Scottish Government operates within the climate framework laid out by the government in Westminster, it enjoys high degrees of autonomy. In this way, the Scottish Government can better tailor policies to the specificities of the Scottish territory and society. Accordingly, there are no formal links between Scotland's Just Transition Commission and the government in Westminster.

⁹ The Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan was published for public consultation on the 10 January 2023. For the remaining sectors (i.e. agriculture and land use, built environment and construction, and transport) a series of discussion papers outlining the key areas of focus were published in June 2023, with the Draft plans set to be open for public consultation in the beginning of 2024.

Box 1 - Advice on the draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan

On 10 January 2023, the Scottish Government published its draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan (ESJTP), setting the stage for an open consultation process that lasted from 4 April until 9 May. The Just Transition Commission gathered in Glasgow on the 27 January to perform an initial review of the Plan and formulate some preliminary high-level recommendations. These initial considerations were relayed to the Government with a letter signed by the then Chair of the Just Transition Commission – Prof. James Skea – and addressed to Mr. Richard Lochhead, then Minister for Just Transition, Employment and Fair work. Due to their cross-cutting character and their relevance for the Just Transition Plans to follow, these recommendations are reported here.

- **Inequalities:** Sectoral Just Transition Plans should begin with an assessment of the current "state of the sector" in terms of the existing inequalities (related to income, gender, race, etc.) and the factors that contribute to and perpetuate these inequalities.
- **Equity:** A just transition approach requires that the costs and benefits of transition be shared equitably. To ensure this, just transition plans should clearly map out the costs and benefits associated with the measures to be undertaken, as well as who should pay.
- Fair work: Fair work considerations must be a central and explicit focus of all Just Transition Plans.
- **Engagement:** Just Transition Plans should demonstrate how they have been shaped by engagement and co-design processes by documenting where this work had a material impact on the plan.
- Accessibility: Just Transition Plans must be accessible to everyone whose lives and livelihoods are likely to be impacted by the transition to Net Zero. The principles, decisions, aims, actions, costs and benefits of these plans should be expressed in a way that a non-specialist can understand. This is a minimal requirement to enable meaningful engagement, consultation and co-design.
- **Scale/quantification:** The structure of Just Transition Plans should reflect the comparative scale attached to different elements of the strategy in terms of their importance to delivering a just transition. This implies directing most research, consultations and investments towards the actions that are set to have the greatest impact on CO2 emissions reductions. For example, the Energy Sectoral Plan was the first to be discussed and drafted given its relevance for the entire Scottish production system and society at large.
- **Risk management:** Just Transition Plans should include a detailed and credible assessment of key risks to strategic delivery as well as actions to mitigate these risks. For example, considering the Secotral Plan for Built Environment and Construction, one severe risk is the lack of a suitably skilled workforce to perform the renovations needed.
- **Road maps:** Road maps are a critical tool in the development of credible Just Transition Plans. These should be detailed and thorough, mapping interdependencies between actions and outcomes, and providing a critical path analysis that includes a realistic assessment of institutional capacity and other key constraints.
- **Finance and investment:** All forms of finance in Scotland need to support a just transition, with a vanguard role for public finance, with private finance implementing clear just transition standards and a real opportunity for Scotland to lead the way in community finance for a just transition.
- **Mainstreaming:** A "standalone" format for Just Transition Plans may be an effective approach to maintain a clear focus on the action plan to achieve fairness, how progress will be assessed, and key risks.

On 14 April 2023, in the context of the public consultations on the Draft ESJTP, the Just Transition Commission followed this initial communication with further, more detailed advice. Those recommendations are available <u>here</u>.

Key success factors and lessons learnt

The success of the Just Transition Commission in aiding Scotland to achieve its net-zero goals remains to be seen. However, some key success factors can already be highlighted. First, the Commission proved how a broad understanding – and more importantly, a **shared understanding** – of what a just transition entails is required to take meaningful action.

Second, the Commission proved to have an **effective governance structure**. Indeed, while the Commission is independent of government, it was able to collaborate very fruitfully with the former. Another key takeaway concerning governance relates to the inclusion of many diverse social interest groups who can share original perspectives.

Third, **stakeholder engagement** at a very fine grain allowed to uncover local opportunities and grievances, and to build consensus on the required actions. The idea that no place is too small and that holding town hall meetings is worth it even with a negligible number of participants, has proved to lead to powerful insights and substantiates the rhetoric behind a transition that keeps people at its centre.

Finally, the experience with the review and scrutiny of the draft sectoral plans proposed by the Scottish Government revealed the importance of taking a **pragmatic, detail-oriented approach** and moving away from aspirational planning.

Scalability and transferability

Concerning scalability and transferability, while the experience of the Just Transition Commission could be replicated elsewhere, one should be careful not to over-learn lessons. Indeed, the highlevel takeaways should be embraced by Member States seeking to set up a similar independent advisory body. For example, the Just Transition Commission's mode of governance and operations, based on the representation of various social interests and independent counselling to the Government, feature as success factors worth replicating. However, the specific recommendations embedded in the plans should be grounded in an understanding of the context in which they are to be implemented. The peculiarities of Scotland, such as its rich reserves of oil and natural gas in the North Sea or the suboptimal condition of the housing stock, are exactly the type of challenges that should inform pragmatic planning. Arguably, it is also the case that governing a just transition is easier on a **smaller scale**. Scotland accounts for a population of 5.5 million dispersed in an area of around 80 000 km². Still, it was possible for the Commission to hold meetings even in remote areas and address directly the local communities. In larger countries or indeed in the EU as a whole - this may pose considerable difficulties.

Key challenges

Lastly, it is essential to underscore some key challenges. One of the primary obstacles that needed to be overcome was enhancing the Government's engagement with the Just transition Commission and fostering a **more proactive stance** of the latter. Fortunately, this hurdle has largely been addressed, and there is now a well-defined memorandum of understanding between the Commission and the Government that clearly outlines the Commission's active role. Then, from an operational standpoint, the Commission has emphasised the importance of **practical, as opposed to idealistic, planning**. Indeed, the plans initially proposed by the Government looked somewhat aspirational and lacked the detail the Just Transition Commission was advocating for.

Box 2 – Discussion documents

In preparation of the work that will be done on the next three Sectoral Just Transition Plans (agriculture and land use, built environment and construction, and transport), the Just Transition Commission has drafted and circulated **three briefing documents** that are meant to set the scene for following discussions and engagement with government, as well as solicit feedback from stakeholders concerned by the net zero transition in these sectors. These documents are the result of dedicated workshops that were held between April and June 2023 to identify specific challenges and questions that need to be addressed by the Sectoral Just Transition Plans.

- Agriculture and land use: The objective of the engagement session which took place on the remote estate of Castle Grant
 with officials of the Scottish Government's Agriculture Team and representatives of various farmers' associations was to
 provide guidance to the Scottish Government on important questions that need to be addressed in the forthcoming plan for
 the land use and agriculture sector. The main emphasis of the workshops was to examine the effectiveness of communication
 about significant changes that are to happen in the sector in the process of a just transition, targeting especially land managers,
 communities, and affected groups whose lifestyles will be impacted by the transition.
- **Transport:** The Just Transition Commission recognises that the existing transport system is highly inequitable, with rail, bus and ferry services being critically under-developed. This topic was investigated through a series of engagement workshops in Dundee, where commissioners met with government officials, local authorities, and representatives of stakeholders' associations. Some of the key messages that emerged from these workshops were the need to adopt a whole system approach in the design of the Transport Just Transition Plan, namely the need to complement transport policies with suitable spatial and land use planning; and the fact that, for the transition to be just and successful, a redistributive strategy must ensure that revenues raised from road user charges must be funnelled into more sustainable public transport networks for the most disadvantaged.
- Built environment and construction: The Just Transition Commission recognises how one of the most critical challenges
 in reaching net zero concerns the retrofit of the building stock to comply with higher energy efficiency standards. This topic
 is essential to just transition discussions for two main reasons. First, the construction industry is known to have persistent
 problems in terms of pay, safety, job security and systematic inequalities. Second, a clear strategic question, which will
 arise repeatedly in delivering the transition, is here particularly manifest: "Who should pay for the needed investments?"
 After having engaged with specialist retrofit contractors and visited a large-scale social housing in North Lanarkshire, the
 Just Transition Commission held an open town hall meeting in Glasgow which led to the formulation of five key messages
 that will need to be addressed in the Built environment Just Transition Plan. These include, inter alia, the need to make the
 construction industry fairer, the need to improve public procurement processes and devise new financing methods that could
 lead to more equitable sharing of costs and benefits, and the need to review training curricula in the sector to ensure the
 availability and suitability of the workforce.

Outlook

While the Just Transition Commission's consultations are in the early stages, it is anticipated that its recommendations will be integrated into four pivotal sectoral transition plans by late 2023 or the beginning of 2024. These plans are designed to guide Scotland in its pursuit of the ambitious goal of achieving a net-zero economy by 2045.

The first of these will be the **Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan** (ESJTP), to which the Just Transition Commission has already provided some high-level considerations at the beginning of 2023, as detailed in Box 1. The importance of the development of this plan is two-fold. On the one hand, most crucially, to fulfil the Commission's remit on this vital issue. On the other hand, it will form the blueprint for work on the plans to follow, initiating more systematised efforts.

Another key development on the horizon concerns the objective to **engage more with the monitoring and evaluation dimension** of the Commission's remit. To this point, the Commission will support the Government in the definition of clear, pragmatic, and suitably granular indicators, which are essential to monitor the transition. Furthermore, the Just Transition Commission will start to **scrutinise and advise on draft transition plans for specific areas** of the country. For example, discussions have started on how to manage the transition of the Grangemouth area, a town whose both history and fate are deeply entwined with the history and fate of the homonymous industrial site near the city. One must note that as the work of the Commission progresses and tackles more specific and more local issues, the array of social interests represented is expected to widen, as people with specific expertise on emerging areas of enquiry are constantly sought after and engaged.

Finally, despite the Just Transition Commission being set to dissolve in 2026 with the next parliamentary elections, it is arguable that the **political will exists for a third iteration**. Indeed, the ambition of Scotland's objectives, the realisation of how difficult and demanding the required changes are, and the historical experience with an unjust de-industrialisation phase still resonate with the public and the political class. Since the key sectoral transition plans should be in place by then, the remit for this third iteration will shift more decisively towards monitoring and risk assessment activities (i.e. more in line with the operations of the Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change).

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