



CLD Standards Council Scotland

Response
to
Scottish Government
on

Climate Change Plan

Prepared by Vikki Carpenter
Development Officer: Policy

About Us

The CLD Standards Council Scotland is the professional body for people who work or volunteer in community learning and development (CLD) across Scotland. CLD is a field of professional practice which has three integral domains of practice; adult learning, community development and youth work. As a member-led organisation we have a growing membership of over 3325 members (inclusive of CLD: Youth Work practitioners), an executive committee and three functional committees which are made up of members from across the CLD sector in Scotland. Our approach and work-plans to deliver our core responsibilities are defined by our member committees and based on feedback from the wider membership.

Our ministerially set core responsibilities are:

- Deliver a professional approvals structure for qualifications, courses, and development opportunities for everyone involved in CLD
- Maintain a registration system available to practitioners delivering and active in CLD practice
- Develop and establish a model of supported induction, professional learning, and training opportunities
- Improve and develop our organisational capability; and
- Collaborate and contribute to relevant CLD policy and workforce development information.

Vision

“Our vision is that the communities and people of Scotland are served by CLD practitioners that are recognised as competent, confident and committed to equality, empowerment and life-wide learning for all.”

Mission

“Our mission is to drive high standards of professional practice in the CLD sector by the approval of professional learning, the registration of practitioners and the enabling of professional development, working with our members to be a voice for the profession.”

The CLD Standards Council works with a wide range of organisations across CLD and education sectors, nationally and internationally. We are members of a number of organisations, some we have specific partnership or framework agreements with, and we engage and work with many others.

Organisations we have formal agreements with:

- AIEB (All Ireland Endorsement Body for Community Work Education and Training)
- COSLA (Convention of Scottish Local Authorities)
- Education Scotland
- GTCS (General Teaching Council Scotland)
- JETS (Joint Education and Training Standards – UK & Republic of Ireland)
- SCURL (Scottish Confederation of University and Research Libraries)
- Volunteer Scotland

Organisations we have membership of:

- BEMIS (Black and Ethnic Minority Infrastructure in Scotland)
- CDAS (Community Development Alliance)
- Human Rights Consortium Scotland
- IACD (International Association for Community Development)
- Inclusion Scotland
- PARN (Professional Association of Research Networks)
- SCDI (Scottish Council for Development & Industry)
- SCQF (Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework)
- SCVO (Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations)
- TAG:PALYCW (The Professional Association of Lecturers in Youth and Community Work)

Key Stakeholders and Partner Organisations:

- Alliance of Commonwealth Youth Work Associations (ACWYA)
- CLD Managers Scotland
- CLD Professional Learning Networks
- College Development Network
- CWA (Community Work Australia)
- LEAD Scotland (Linking Education and Disability Scotland)
- Learning Link Scotland
- LGBT Youth Scotland
- Open University
- SCDC (Scottish Community Development Centre)
- SCDN (Scottish Community Development Network)
- Scotland's Learning Partnership
- The Young Women's Movement
- WEA (Workers' Educational Association)
- YMCA Scotland
- Youth Scotland
- YouthLink Scotland
- Youth 1st (Fife)
- Youth Highland
- Young Scot

For further information on the CLD Standards Council please visit our [website](#) and view our social media [cldstandards](#) | [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) | [Linktree](#). If you would like to discuss this response further, please email us on contact@cldstandardscouncil.org.uk

About Community Learning and Development in Scotland

The CLD sector, which is a unification of the 3 professional practice disciplines of Adult Learning (Including ESOL), Community Development and Youth Work, is an integral and essential part of Scottish education, as recently reported in [Learning: For All. For Life. A report from the Independent Review of Community Learning and Development \(CLD\)](#), which was undertaken by Ms Kate Still, as part of Education Reform, and commissioned by Mr Graeme Dey MSP, the Minister for Higher and Further Education, and Veterans.

The CLD sector across Scotland is receiving considerable amount of attention at present, with the aforementioned recent Independent Review of CLD publishing the Still report [Learning: For All. For Life](#), (June 2024) and the HMIE producing the [Evaluation of Community Learning and Development in Scotland](#), alongside the wider piece around [Education Reform](#) in Scotland.

CLD has its origins in the period of change that swept through society in the 18th and 19th centuries. New industries, and changes in science, technology, land use and education dislocated or smashed traditional forms of family and community life, with the history of youth work starting with voluntary action through faith organisations. Over time, we saw the further development of adult and young people's education with development of the [Workers Educational Association](#) and the National Council of Labour Colleges, and then the growth of community development as a response to the "rediscovery of poverty" in the 1960's. The Alexander Report – [Adult Education: the challenge of change](#) (HMSO 1975) was a response to the persistent issues of disadvantage and advocated that "Adult education should be regarded as an aspect of community education and should with the youth and community service, be incorporated into a community education service". In 1998, Mr Brian Wilson MP established a working group to "consider a national strategy for community based adult education, youth work and educational support for community development in the light of Government priorities in relation to social inclusion and lifelong learning" ([Communities: Change Through Learning. P14](#)). In 2004, the Scottish Executive published [Working and Learning Together to Build Stronger Communities](#), stating "Community learning and development should incorporate the best of practice undertaken in the fields of 'community education' and 'community development'. It should enable individuals and communities to make real changes to their lives through community action and community-based learning. CLD is an approach which enables agencies to work with communities and provide access to their involvement in learning, action, and decision-making." These advancements were fundamental in bringing about the birth of CLD in the form it has grown into in the 21st century.

CLD – A Strategic Professional Practice

CLD is a field of professional practice that is critical in the achievement of any policy and legislation that requires community engagement, development and learning as it supports the learning, growth, empowerment of individuals and communities, as well as supports the delivery of other services. From CLD supporting climate action change, sustainability and protecting our environment, as well as developing neighborhoods, community empowerment and community support groups, to working with young people and adults regarding enablement and citizenship and improving literacy and numeracy within Scotland's communities which impacts on economy, health and wellbeing.

CLD empowers individuals across Scotland to identify both personal and collective goals, take action to drive change, and ultimately achieve these objectives. By utilising a combination of formal and informal learning methods and social development approaches, CLD programmes are designed through direct engagement with communities and participants. These learning initiatives specifically support those who are often excluded from decision-making processes that impact their lives. In doing so, CLD practice enhances democratic participation and broadens its influence.

The three domains of CLD (Adult Learning, Community Development, and Youth Work) work in unison to deliver [Scotland's National Outcomes](#). As a single, unified professional discipline, CLD is a vital educative force, and its impact should be strengthened through focused legislation. Guided by the [National Performance Framework](#), these domains are deeply interconnected — each reinforcing the other to create lasting change for our communities across Scotland. For example, youth work on employability or equalities has far greater and more sustainable impact when complemented by community-based adult education and community development initiatives that engage families and whole communities to lead change. We offer a downloadable "[Guide to CLD in Scotland](#)" for further information.

Fundamental to the practice of CLD across all settings are these values which have been identified by the CLD Standards Council:

- **Self-determination** – respecting the individual and valuing the right of people to make their own choices.
- **Inclusion** – valuing equality of both opportunity and outcome and challenging discriminatory practice.
- **Empowerment** – increasing the ability of individuals and groups to influence issues that affect them and their communities through individual and/ or collective action.
- **Working collaboratively** – maximising collaborative working relationships in partnerships between the many agencies which contribute to CLD, including collaborative work with participants, learners and communities.
- **Promotion of learning as a lifelong activity** – ensuring that individuals are aware of a range of learning opportunities and are able to access relevant options at any stage of their life.

In Scotland, CLD has a legislative underpinning through the implementation of the [Requirements for Community Learning and Development \(Scotland\) Regulations 2013](#), which are located as part of Section 2 of the [Education \(Scotland\) Act 1980](#). These Regulations require each local authority to [publish a 3-year plan](#) that details the delivery of CLD activity in the local authority area, as stipulated in the [community-learning-development-plans-guidance-2024-2027.pdf](#).

The following diagram was used in the 2012 Strategic Guidance on CLD for Community Planning Partnerships to illustrate the policy context for CLD in Scotland and continues to provide a useful picture of the pivotal role of CLD.



This response was compiled on behalf of the members of the CLD Standards Council following previous engagements with members including Net Zero Energy Developments, Wellbeing and Sustainability Bill, Community Right to Buy, Community Wealth Building and Rural Delivery Plan.

Assumptions:

It is important to recognise that this CLD Standards Council response provides an insight into the views and experiences of members based on the engagement mentioned above. The membership consultation data provides a valuable insight into the experiences based on the views of the member participants. This response is not representative of the entire CLD sector across Scotland or the full CLD Standards Council membership.

Response from the CLD Standards Council to Scottish Governments Draft Climate Change Plan

This response highlights key themes and addresses the consultation questions most relevant to CLD. It draws on extensive engagement with our members and partner organisations, reflecting both the operational realities and lived experiences of CLD practitioners and the communities they serve. The purpose of this submission is to provide an informed response to the draft Climate Action Plan, identifying opportunities for CLD to support its delivery and recommending areas where policy and practice could be strengthened to maximise impact.

We have responded to questions 1, 2, 3, 8, 16, 18, and 29.

Question 1: What are your views on our approach to delivering a just transition for people and communities?

The Scottish Government has developed a wide range of policies, strategies and guidance to support community empowerment, economic development and climate action. However, these frameworks are often insufficiently aligned in their objectives and delivery mechanisms, particularly in relation to Just Transition and Net Zero ambitions.

Gaps/Barriers in approach

A recurring weakness across policy which is consistently mentioned by our members is the limited attention given to the workforce transition, skills pipelines and human infrastructure required to deliver a fair, inclusive and place-based transition to a net zero economy.

Achieving net zero is fundamentally a people-centred transformation, requiring large-scale reskilling, upskilling and community capacity-building. Yet many existing strategies focus primarily on infrastructure, technology and economic outputs, without adequately addressing how individuals and communities will be supported to access emerging green jobs, transition from high-carbon sectors, or develop the skills and confidence needed to participate in local decision-making. This disconnect risks widening existing inequalities and undermining the core principles of a Just Transition.

Achieving solutions using a CLD approach

As a professional sector embedded across communities in Scotland, CLD plays a critical and often under-recognised role in enabling communities' transition for a net zero future. CLD works directly with individuals and communities to support lifelong learning, employability, leadership development and civic participation, creating the foundations of effective skills pipelines that are inclusive, accessible and responsive to local needs. Through trusted relationships and place-based practice by a professional workforce, CLD is uniquely positioned to engage those furthest from the labour market, support transitions between sectors, and ensure that net zero opportunities are shaped by, and benefit, local people. CLD also plays a vital role in translating national net zero and Just Transition policies into meaningful local action. By supporting community engagement, skills development and participatory approaches, CLD ensures that workforce planning is informed by lived experience and that data collection reflects genuine, bottom-up understanding of community strengths, barriers and aspirations. This approach strengthens policy coherence, supports fair work principles, and helps align education, employability and economic development systems with climate objectives.

Public bodies must therefore recognise and invest in the CLD sector as a key delivery partner in Scotland's Just Transition. Without intentional alignment between net zero policy, skills development frameworks and community-based workforce support, the transition risks being neither just nor effective. Embedding CLD more explicitly within net zero and workforce strategies would help ensure that Scotland's climate ambitions are matched by inclusive skills pathways, resilient communities and sustainable local economies.

We would like to highlight the following key documents, which we believe are essential to informing a joined-up approach to Just Transition, net zero delivery and skills pipeline development at community level:

- [Community Empowerment \(Scotland\) Act 2015](#)
- [National Standards for Community Engagement](#)
- [Community Wealth Building \(Scotland\) Bill](#)
- [Democracy Matters 2](#)
- [Wellbeing and Sustainable Development \(Scotland\) Bill](#)
- [Community-led regeneration - Regeneration - gov.scot](#)
- [Empowering Communities Programme - Community empowerment - gov.scot](#)
- [The Place Standard tool is a way of assessing places. | Our Place](#)
- [Community benefits from net zero energy developments: consultation - gov.scot](#)
- [Social capital and community wellbeing in Scotland - gov.scot](#)
- [Participation handbook - gov.scot](#)
- [Just Transition](#)
- [Human Rights Bill for Scotland: discussion paper - gov.scot](#)
- [Human rights - gov.scot](#)

Question 2: We recognise that workers face particular impacts from the Plan and we have outlined our approach to supporting the transition of the workforce, including skills for jobs. What skills, training and qualification provisions will be most important in a net zero future and what more could be done to support them?

Scotland's Draft Climate Change Plan 2026–2040 recognises that delivering net zero will require a significant transformation of the workforce and that this transition must be fair, inclusive and people centred. While technical and sector specific skills will be essential, the Plan also highlights that many workers will experience job change, reskilling or displacement, and that communities will be affected unevenly. This means skills provision must go beyond formal qualifications alone and be supported by strong, community-based learning and transition pathways.

The skills, training and qualification provisions most important in a net zero future include:

- Technical and vocational skills aligned to low-carbon sectors identified in the Climate Change Plan, such as clean heat, renewable energy, transport decarbonisation and retrofit.
- Transferable and transition skills, recognising that many workers already have relevant experience that can be adapted to new roles if supported through reskilling, recognition of prior learning and modular training.
- Core and employability skills, including digital literacy, adaptability, confidence and career navigation, which enable individuals to move between sectors as jobs evolve.

- Climate literacy and systems understanding, supporting workers and communities to understand net zero objectives, local impacts and emerging opportunities.
- Community leadership, participation and engagement skills, enabling communities to shape local net zero developments, access community benefits and influence place-based transition planning.

A CLD approach to supporting skills development

Through working directly with individuals, volunteers and communities, CLD has a critical role in supporting these skills and enabling the workforce transition described in the Climate Change Plan.

In short, CLD's unique position and approach provides the following:

- Place- based, person-centred, relationship-led approach, particularly engaging those furthest from the labour market and least likely to access formal education, training or employment pathways.
- tailored learning opportunities, mentoring, recognition of prior learning and progression pathways, helping volunteers and community members to build transferable skills such as teamwork, problem-solving, digital skills and climate literacy.
- Maximising volunteer impact and potential - Volunteers are a vital part of Scotland's community infrastructure and play a significant role in delivering local climate action, community energy initiatives, food growing, transport solutions and wider wellbeing support. Through CLD, volunteers are supported to develop skills, confidence and leadership, often acting as a first step into learning, employability or paid work within emerging low-carbon sectors. This support enables volunteers to meaningfully engage in net zero developments, influence local decision-making and contribute to place-based solutions, while also strengthening individual employability and resilience.

CLD acts as a key entry point into skills pipelines, translating national net zero ambitions into meaningful local participation, workforce readiness and inclusive employment outcomes, while ensuring that the transition to net zero is grounded in community capacity and collective action. However, to fulfil this role effectively, more could be done to support both skills provision and the CLD sector workforce itself. This includes:

- Targeted training and professional development for CLD practitioners on net zero, climate literacy and Just Transition principles, enabling them to support communities and workers through change.
- Stronger integration of the CLD sector within skills and workforce planning, including alignment with colleges, Skills Development Scotland, employability services and regional skills planning, as envisaged by the Climate Change Plan.
- Flexible, modular and bite-sized learning opportunities, allowing workers to retrain at pace and gain recognised qualifications without unnecessary barriers.
- Clear progression routes and recognition of prior learning, supporting fair access to green jobs and avoiding duplication of learning.
- Sustained investment in community-based learning and outreach, recognising that workforce transition is a long-term process rather than a short-term intervention.

Embedding CLD more explicitly within the delivery of the Climate Change Plan would strengthen inclusive skills pipelines, support Fair Work principles and ensure that Scotland's transition to net

zero is genuinely just. By investing in community-based learning and workforce support, the Plan's ambitions can be realised in ways that are locally grounded, equitable and responsive to the lived experience of workers and communities across Scotland.

Question 3: The Plan will bring opportunities and challenges for businesses and employers. How can we best support employers across the private, public and third sectors to make the changes needed and seize the benefits of net zero?

The Climate Change Plan creates both opportunities and pressures for employers across all sectors. To support employers to adapt and benefit from net zero, workforce development and organisational capacity must be prioritised alongside technical change. This is particularly important for third-sector CLD organisations, which play a critical role in community engagement and workforce transition but often face significant funding constraints.

Many third-sector CLD organisations rely on short-term, project-based funding, limiting their ability to plan, retain staff and support CLD practitioners to undertake qualifications and professional learning. As expectations on community engagement and skills support increase under the Climate Change Plan, these pressures risk undermining delivery unless addressed. Sustainable funding or secure employment for CLD workers means that their connections and relationship-building within communities can be sustained and deepened over time, improving trust, continuity and local knowledge. This has a direct impact on the quality of community engagement, enabling more inclusive participation, particularly from individuals and groups who are least likely to engage with short-term or transactional initiatives.

Stable CLD roles support stronger identification of community needs, strengths and barriers, leading to more effective skills development, workforce transition support and local climate action. Over time, this continuity strengthens volunteer development, leadership pathways and progression into learning, training or employment, helping communities to engage meaningfully with net zero initiatives and benefit from emerging opportunities. In turn, this improves delivery of place-based Just Transition outcomes, ensuring that net zero policies are grounded in lived experience, locally relevant and socially equitable.

Support should include

- longer-term funding models
- dedicated resources for CLD qualifications and workforce development
- flexible training pathways that reflect third sector working realities

CLD organisations should be explicitly recognised as key players in this Climate Change Plan, enabling them to access skills and training funding. Strengthening support for third-sector, private and local authority CLD employers will improve workforce stability, build skills capacity and help ensure that net zero delivers inclusive, community-led benefits in line with Just Transition principles.

Question 8: How can the Scottish Government support communities to participate in planning of local sustainable infrastructure (such as, walking, wheeling and cycling routes)?

Communities can only meaningfully participate in the planning and delivery of a local sustainable infrastructure, such as walking, wheeling and cycling routes that you mentioned, if they are supported by skilled, trusted, and adequately resourced CLD practitioners. CLD practitioners are the key workforce to enable this participation. They have the expertise, local knowledge, and relationship-based approach necessary to engage communities in inclusive, sustained dialogue, ensuring that plans reflect lived experience and local priorities.

To strengthen this role, the Scottish Government should provide sustainable funding and long-term investment in the CLD workforce, allowing organisations to retain skilled practitioners and plan for ongoing engagement. Funding should explicitly cover:

- Professional development and increased CLD Standards Council endorsed accredited training for CLD practitioners in participatory planning, community engagement, and infrastructure literacy.
- Capacity to support volunteers and community champions, who often form the backbone of local sustainability initiatives, enabling them to contribute effectively and gain recognised skills.
- Time and resource for deep, relationship led engagement, ensuring that participation goes beyond short term consultations to genuinely influence design and delivery.

By investing in the CLD workforce in this way, the Scottish Government can build sustainable, locally embedded capacity to support communities in shaping infrastructure that is safe, accessible, and aligned with net zero objectives. This approach ensures that engagement is not transactional, that local priorities are central, and that community ownership of sustainable infrastructure is sustained over time.

In short, CLD practitioners are the linchpin of community participation, and funding their workforce and skills development is essential to delivering inclusive, resilient and locally supported sustainable infrastructure across Scotland.

Members offer the following examples of suggested good practice:

- [Shetland community benefits fund](#) mixes benefits for communities directly impacted and wider communities. It also mixes small Community Council controlled funds with additional strategic funding with priorities set via a community consultation process. [Nadara](#) (energy developers) have also worked with the [New Economic Foundation](#) to review their community benefits processes, set priorities for community benefits going forwards, including building community capacity, developing community action plans, the importance of community governance etc.
- [EATS Rosyth](#) was founded in 2015 by Rosyth Community Council and a dedicated group of volunteers who transformed unappealing spaces into the beautiful EATS Centenary Orchard and EATS Community Garden.
- [Live Argyll's](#) Get Ready 4 Work group, supporting young people aged 15-22, have transformed an unused strip of land behind their building into a vibrant sustainable outdoor learning space. What began as a long, narrow, and neglected area has been redesigned into a multi-purpose environment promoting biodiversity, food growing and climate conscious behaviours through creating a small wildlife haven and raised beds to

grow their own vegetables, a dead hedge and bug hotel to encourage wildlife, composting, and rainwater collection for sustainability.

- The Argyll and Bute Youth Action Council (ABYAC) and associated Action Groups form the core youth-led community engagement model across Argyll and Bute. These groups bring together young people to influence decision making, shape local policies and take practical action to support environmental sustainability and community wellbeing. The groups have participated in a range of climate-conscious and community initiatives such as participating in the Scottish Government Net Zero 'Just Transition' programme, litter picking, and gardening for a local care home, creating accessible and enjoyable outdoor spaces for residents.
- Covering Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray, the [NESCAN Hub](#) demonstrates how community projects can support a just transition to net zero in North East Scotland. In 2022, it piloted community climate assemblies to enable local people to define what a just transition means for them.
- [Our Garnock Valley](#) In 2025, communities across the Garnock Valley concluded a 2 year process of producing a community-led regeneration plan, supported by North Ayrshire Council. The completed plan with eight calls to action, is the communities plan focusing their priorities for Garnock Valley. In October 2025, the Plan picked up a prestigious national award in recognition of its trailblazing 'Next Generation Regeneration' approach - the same week that the Plan was registered by the Council as a Local Place Plan to guide future development.
- [Community Transport Action](#) have more than 200 members delivering a diversity of transport projects and services, from community-owned buses and car clubs to Dial-a-Ride and active travel, which are at the very heart of urban, rural and island communities from Edinburgh to Na h-Eileanan an Iar.
- [High Life Highland's Green Libraries](#) initiative teamed up with the Countryside Rangers last year, with four libraries taking part in a six-month funded project. A follow-up meeting with Education Scotland's CLD Learning for Sustainability team to review the final [report](#) helped drive momentum for further investment. As a result, new CLICS funding has now been secured to expand the programme, enabling ten additional Green Libraries to deliver a full-year project beginning in 2026.
- Any community-based decisions need to have **input from as wide a range of community members** as possible. This means not just releasing information online but instead providing print copies and opportunities to attend face to face briefings. A good example is Citizen and Climate Assemblies, bringing together a diverse range of people and communities, to learn, deliberate and make recommendations on aspects of the climate crisis. There is a [report](#) on the recent collaborative research project led by a team of Scottish Government Social Researchers and independent academics from the Universities of Edinburgh and Newcastle, on Scotland's first national Citizens' Assembly
- [Strathnairn Development Company](#), SSE used to organise a Community Development Network for CLD workers based in neighbouring communities who received community benefits. This was a great network to share learning between communities and developers, so it would be good for CLD practitioners and community members to have more of these opportunities to meet with developers rather than this mainly happening at a strategic level.
- The Highland Youth Parliament's "Guardians of this Galaxy" made a powerful contribution to the Climate Change Committee recently, delivering a compelling presentation and confidently responding to Members' questions. Their session, broadcast at the Climate

Change Committee meeting on Wednesday 28 January 2026 (beginning at 14:06 on [Highland Council Webcasting](#)), demonstrated the depth of their insight and commitment. So impressed was the Committee Chair that he confirmed the group would be fully involved in future committee work and proposed a motion to support all four of their key asks.

- Development trusts in Scotland are community-owned and community-led organisations that enable local people to address economic, environmental and social needs through regeneration. [Udny Community Trust](#) for example, uses income from a community wind turbine to fund local projects. Development Trusts Association Scotland ([DTAS](#)) supports communities across Scotland to establish and sustain development trusts, helping neighbourhoods to thrive through community-led action, partnership working and enterprise
- Education Scotland contribute to the [Learning for sustainability: action plan 2023 to 2030 - gov.scot](#). Learning for Sustainability (LfS) is about exploring local and global issues. It's about children, young people and communities taking action for a better future. There are a range of videos evidencing the breadth of work being carried out across Scotland by CLD teams supporting communities, young people and adults. Here are a few examples.
Tannahill Centre, Paisley: <https://youtu.be/w2Ryt4tYUi0>
ESOL Woman's Group, Ayr: <https://youtu.be/1hSCjkd1-M>
Walks and Talks, Kelty: <https://youtu.be/9OrUdBzdsnE>

The Role of CLD in Supporting Climate Action Through Volunteer/Community Engagement

The CLD sector is central to enabling and sustaining volunteer/community involvement in climate action across Scotland. Its core principles of empowerment, participation, inclusion, and lifelong learning directly support the development of the skills, knowledge, and confidence needed to respond to the climate emergency at a local level.

CLD provides structured learning opportunities, capacity-building programs, and accessible pathways that equip volunteers to take meaningful, sustainable action. This includes understanding climate science, identifying and implementing local solutions, and advocating for systemic change. By supporting volunteers in these ways, CLD ensures that individual and community-led initiatives are informed, effective, and resilient.

Crucially, CLD connects volunteer activity to broader frameworks by fostering collaboration between communities, employers, local authorities, and national strategies. This integration ensures that grassroots climate action is aligned with Scotland's wider sustainability goals rather than operating in isolation. Its emphasis on equity and inclusion also helps remove barriers to participation, enabling diverse communities to contribute to climate initiatives and ensuring that volunteer engagement reflects the full range of Scottish society.

It is important that the Climate Change Plan does not place additional or unintended burdens on volunteers or the wider voluntary sector. Evidence from the Volunteer Scotland's analysis of [Time Well Spent 2023](#) survey indicates that 24% of volunteers in Scotland feel their role is increasingly akin to paid employment, while a further 21% report that the organisations they support place unreasonable expectations on the time and effort required. Moreover, despite an overall increase in volunteering at the national level, organisations still identify volunteer recruitment as their most significant challenge. In this context, the Climate Change Plan should avoid introducing new responsibilities that risk exacerbating existing pressures on volunteers and

should ensure that the voluntary sector is appropriately and sustainably resourced to support delivery.

Question 16: Which groups or communities do you think will be most affected by the transition to net zero, and in what ways?

Vulnerable Households and Disproportionate Impacts

Low-income and vulnerable households, particularly those in the bottom 40% by income, face the greatest pressures during the net-zero transition. Many struggle to afford essential home upgrades, such as insulation or low-carbon heating like heat pumps, and face rising energy and transport costs, which can deepen existing inequalities and create the risk of “transition poverty.” Members and partner organisations across the CLD sector informed us that other groups or communities disproportionately affected in Scotland include:

- Tenants and social housing occupants: Many live in energy inefficient properties where they have limited control over home improvements, resulting in higher fuel costs and fewer opportunities to participate in climate action. In Scotland, tenants in the social housing sector often rely on support from programmes such as the Energy Efficient Scotland Standard to access low-carbon home improvements.
- Rural and remote communities: In areas such as the Highlands and Islands, limited public transport and long travel distances make adoption of sustainable transport solutions challenging. Households in these communities often rely on private vehicles, increasing transport costs and carbon emissions.
- Older adults and those with lower digital literacy: Older Scots may struggle to engage with new net-zero technologies, such as smart meters, online energy advice, or low-carbon heating schemes, limiting their ability to benefit from government support programmes.
- Families experiencing multiple vulnerabilities: Households facing low income, poor-quality housing, and limited access to local services—common in parts of Glasgow, Dundee, and other urban centres—experience compounded barriers, making it harder to adopt sustainable behaviours or access financial support for net-zero measures.

Addressing these disparities requires targeted policy interventions, financial support, and community-based engagement led by a skilled CLD workforce. CLD practitioners build trust within communities, connect vulnerable households to low-carbon opportunities, and provide practical skills, confidence, and digital literacy to engage with new technologies and programmes. They also mobilise volunteers, co design local solutions, and ensure marginalised groups, including social housing tenants, rural residents, older adults, and families facing multiple vulnerabilities can participate in decision making.

By embedding the CLD workforce in net-zero initiatives, Scotland can ensure the transition is inclusive, locally grounded, and equitable.

Question 18: If you identified there could be negative impacts of the Climate Change Plan, are there any ways you think we could reduce that negative impact and if so, what would you recommend?

The landscape across community development, especially regarding Climate Action is complex and the language used is often difficult to navigate. Without someone ensuring that communities receive information in a way that is understandable and accessible, only those with experience in similar environments will feel comfortable engaging. The CLD Standards Council and its members recognise that whilst this draft plan is positive and aims to cover all the key areas, the lack of logistical details means it does not acknowledge or reflect barriers that critically impact those most vulnerable within our communities or difficulties regarding engagement.

Members emphasise the importance of clear, accessible language within any policy, strategy or plan which impacts communities. Within the Climate Change Plan, many words and phrases used are open to misinterpretation, lack precise meaning, or may be unfamiliar to people living and working across Scotland. To ensure the Plan is truly equitable and inclusive, policy makers should prioritise language that is meaningful, easy to understand, and unambiguous.

We recommend seeking guidance from the [Plain English Campaign](#) to support clarity. Additionally, we suggest that, as part of the review process, the language used throughout the Plan be tested with individuals from diverse communities across Scotland. This should include:

- Learners with lower literacy levels, to assess accessibility.
- New Scots refugees, ESOL learners, and translators, to ensure the intended meaning is accurately conveyed in the primary immigrant and foreign languages spoken in Scotland (e.g., Arabic, Chinese, French, Hindi, Punjabi, Polish, Spanish, Urdu).

Further guidance on relevant languages can be drawn from the recent Census data ([Languages | Scotland's Census](#)), ensuring that communication is inclusive and accurately reaches all communities.

We would like to highlight concerns about the risk of raising hopes and expectations for meaningful change and growth within Scotland's communities, only for these aspirations to be negatively impacted if there are insufficient resources, infrastructure, services, or funding to support implementation in the long term. Such unmet expectations can lead to frustration, disengagement, and a loss of trust in the process. In Scottish Government's Planning with People guidance, published by the Scottish Government on the 21st of April 2023, it clearly states *"Effective services must be designed with and for people and communities – not delivered, top down for administrative convenience. In order to be effective, community engagement must be relevant, meaningful and have a clearly defined focus"*. For this to happen this any guidance must clearly show commitment to this throughout and have the necessary funding and resources in place to support meaningful community development for community benefit projects and achievement of net zero. CLD Standards Council members commented:

"Lack of up to date, relevant information. This information is often contained within extremely long documents, which many CLD practitioners simply do not have time to fully read and comprehend. An easy read version is always a good idea."

“the language is complex and unless there's someone there making sure, they get the info they need in a way that's understandable and relatable, then the only people from the community who engage are those who work or have worked in environments where they're comfortable with this.”

Question 29: Please detail any specific changes that would improve any of the 14 proposed indicators, including any data sources not currently included within this framework that could provide a useful indicator of progress towards a just transition in Scotland on an annual basis.

- 1. Participation in decision making**
- 2. Community energy**
- 3. Community benefits**
- 4. Changes to places**
- 5. Fuel Poverty**
- 6. Transport affordability**
- 7. Socio-economic impact on oil and gas communities**
- 8. Impact on household finances in oil and gas communities**
- 9. Access to training for offshore oil and gas workers**
- 10. Green jobs**
- 11. Impact of energy prices on small businesses**
- 12. Air pollution**
- 13. Woodland creation**
- 14. Peatland restoration**

We recommend the inclusion of additional questions within the annual Scottish Climate Survey to capture the role and impact of CLD, both paid and voluntary, in supporting community climate action. These questions should focus on the types of CLD activity contributing to climate outcomes, including climate education, community capacity-building, participation in local decision-making, and place-based climate initiatives. The design of these questions should be informed by engagement with the [CLD Strategic Leadership Group](#), the CLD Standards Council (as the professional body and standard setting organisation for the sector), and other CLD stakeholders and policy leads, ensuring alignment with the Climate Change Plan, Just Transition principles and the National Performance Framework. This would strengthen the national evidence base on CLD's contribution to climate action and support more coherent policy development across climate, community development and education portfolios.

It was felt that the proposed indicators do not adequately capture or offer potential to capture the contribution of the CLD workforce to climate action and community-led transition targets. As evidenced throughout this response, CLD practitioners play a critical role in delivering the Climate Change Plan through supporting the most vulnerable individuals and communities with climate education, community capacity-building, democratic participation, and grassroots place-based development. This contribution of the CLD sector should be explicitly recognised within the monitoring and evaluation framework of the Climate Change Plan.

We strongly recommend the inclusion of a standalone indicator focused on CLD supported community climate action, reflecting the scale, reach and impact of activity enabled by the paid CLD workforce, as well as recognising the volunteer contribution required by communities and organisations. Such an indicator would better align with the principles of a [Just Transition](#),

recognising the role of CLD in ensuring climate action is inclusive, participatory and reduces inequality. It needs to recognise the CLD is a values-based profession, and the values underpin CLD practice. The indicator should also align with the [CLD Competences framework](#) for practice. The development of this additional indicator would also support delivery of the [National Performance Framework](#), particularly the outcomes on Communities, Environment, Education, Human Rights and Fair Work, by evidencing how communities are supported to engage meaningfully in climate decision-making and action.

Evidence for this indicator could also be drawn from a combination of local authority CLD partnership plans and reporting, programme-level monitoring, and qualitative and quantitative data demonstrating outcomes such as increased climate literacy, strengthened community capacity, behaviour change, and inclusive participation. Strengthening national data collection in this area would support improved alignment between climate, community development and education policy, and provide a clearer evidence base on the critical contribution of CLD as preventative social infrastructure within a Just Transition.

Rationale for workforce investment

Investment in the CLD workforce is essential to sustain and scale community development, and specifically climate action. The ongoing [CLD Workforce Survey](#) highlights emerging pressures on workforce capacity, qualifications, recruitment and retention, alongside increasing expectations placed on CLD practitioners to support delivery across multiple policy agendas, including climate action and just transition. Using Climate Change Plan monitoring to evidence the contribution and impact of the CLD workforce would strengthen the case for targeted, long-term investment and support a more coherent, outcome-focused approach to developing the [statutory requirements](#) for CLD.

Conclusion

Strengthening Delivery and Monitoring for a Just, People-Centred Transition

Scotland's transition to net zero will only be just if it is rooted in people, places and the skilled CLD workforce that supports them. While national ambitions are strong, delivery gaps remain particularly around inclusive skills pathways, community participation and the human infrastructure required to turn plans into action. CLD practitioners play an essential role in building confidence, skills and engagement, especially among those least likely to benefit from the transition without targeted support. To make the transition fair and effective, Scotland must invest in the CLD workforce, embed CLD within skills planning, and ensure communities can meaningfully shape local climate decisions.

Recommendations for Monitoring Progress

Introduce a CLD-Supported Community Climate Action Indicator: A new indicator should track CLD's contribution to climate literacy, inclusive participation and community-led action, reflecting CLD's role in delivering a fair transition.

Add CLD-focused questions to the Scottish Climate Survey: Annual survey questions should capture:

- CLD supported community development, climate learning and participation
- CLD volunteer involvement
- Barriers faced by communities

These should be co-designed with the CLD Standards Council and sector leaders.

Use Existing CLD Partnership Plans as Evidence Sources: Local authority CLD plans already provide rich data on community need, engagement, learning and inclusion. Incorporating these into national monitoring would strengthen evidence without creating additional reporting burdens.

Combine Quantitative Data with Lived-Experience Evidence: Monitoring should include case studies, narratives and local insights to capture community experience, not just numerical outputs.

Track CLD Workforce Capacity as an Enabling Condition: Annual data on workforce stability, professional learning and capacity should be monitored, recognising that community learning, community development, engagement and climate action rely on a supported, skilled CLD workforce.