**Net Zero Nation - Draft Public Engagement Strategy for Climate Change**

**CLDSC Response - DRAFT**

*Q1. Objectives*

*a) What are your views on the three objectives underpinning our approach to engagement on climate change?*

*b) Do you think that any of these objectives should be removed or changed?*

*c) Are there any objectives that you think should be included that are currently missing?*

R1a. The three objectives set out key aspects of a public engagement strategy: raising awareness, supporting participation and encouraging action. We suggest that greater emphasis on education as a means of enabling active, critical engagement with climate change issues is needed. The principles of the strategy state that “Climate justice will be embedded” within the approach taken; referring to climate justice within the objectives, and at other points in the strategy could strengthen its focus on purposeful change.

R1b. While raising awareness of Scottish Government action to address climate change (Objective 1) is an important part of developing public engagement, the approach to showing how this action relates to peoples’ lives should be informed by engagement around issues of concern to them as well as by a communications strategy. We suggest that the objective should be about sustaining a continuing dialogue on climate change policy that involves communication both from and to the government.

R1c. Three objectives focusing on raising awareness, supporting participation and encouraging action provide a clear overall framework for the strategy. We think our suggestions in responses to 1a and 1b could be best included within the existing objectives,

*Q2. Principles*

*a) What are your views on our seven principles for public engagement set out in Box 1?*

*b) Do you think that any of these principles should be removed or changed?*

*c) Are there any principles of good public engagement on climate change that you think are missing?*

R2a. We broadly support the seven principles. We think that it is difficult to know what “Our approach will actively put people first and place people at the heart of all that we do” means in concrete terms and we propose an alternative in response to 2b.

R2b. We suggest replacing “Our approach will actively put people first and place people at the heart of all that we do” – with “Our approach will be based on partnership between government and the public, and will actively encourage the development of leadership on responses to climate change from communities, civil society, local authorities and business as well as from all levels of government”.

R2c. We suggest adding as a further principle: “Our approach will welcome challenge on policies and approaches for adapting to and mitigating climate change as an essential part of driving an effective response”.

*Q3. Other comments*

*a) Do you have any other comments on our overall approach?*

R3a. The strategy could identify more clearly the relationship between macro and micro level change, in particular how changes in legislation, policy, taxation and the economy can support individuals and communities to contribute to combatting or mitigating climate change; for example, the organisation of food production and supply. This would help to create a convincing narrative of the role that individuals and communities can play in change.

We believe that the strategy would be greatly strengthened by emphasising that learning processes should be embedded within support for participation and action. As suggested by our proposed amendments to the principles of the strategy, we think that it would be further strengthened by clearly acknowledging that tensions and disagreements are necessary parts of the process of public engagement, policy development and positive change and by committing to support for distributed leadership on climate change issues.

*Q4. What are your views on the opportunities and challenges for public engagement in the Green Recovery?*

R4 The CLDSC welcomes the draft strategy’s broad commitment to “delivering a green recovery which prioritises economic, social, and environmental wellbeing, and responds to the twin challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss”. Public engagement in the Green Recovery will depend on articulating specific ways that individuals and communities can be involved in developing and delivering the activities that make a green recovery tangible. Promotion of concepts such as a wellbeing economy is unlikely to have an impact beyond a limited circle of those already involved.

*Q5 What are your views on our approach to communicating climate change policy?*

R5 The strategy indicates (p. 19) that “marketing activity will also play a part in educating individuals and organisations about the scale of change needed to address climate change, the policies being developed by the Scottish Government to respond to climate change at home and overseas, and the role of individuals and organisations in getting Scotland to net zero”. Creative marketing approaches clearly have a role in communication on climate change, however we suggest that this role must not be about selling a ready-made product; this will not result in “education”. Developing (rather than “creating”) a “compelling narrative” to engage with will happen through 2-way communication that recognises, on the one hand, that some people are already very aware of the scale of change needed and playing a role in getting Scotland to net zero; and on the other, that many face pressing issues in their lives, which can make climate change and policies to respond to it seem remote and not immediately relevant.

The strategy notes (p. 20) that “governments are often not the most suitable messenger when it comes to communicating policies to differing audiences. Many of the policies included within the CCPu will require a range of organisations to help deliver them. This could be local authorities, wider public sector organisations, businesses, the third sector, and community organisations”. The CLDSC’s survey of CLD practitioners’ responses to the pandemic and lockdown demonstrated that they are ideally placed to link up the work of community organisations, local authorities and other public sector bodies, a role that will be crucial in effective communication of climate change policy. Their skill-set is focused on developing the kind of 2-way communication referred to in the previous paragraph.

Theme 2 of the strategy emphasises (p. 22) that “constructive dialogue with people and communities is at the heart of all new policy”. This key principle should be reflected in all aspects of the strategy.

*Q6. Are you aware of any practical examples or case studies of good practice for communicating on climate change that could be useful for informing our approach?*

Glasgow Science Centre are working on developing two bespoke learning packs for community groups, which will be available on the Our World Our Impact Hub from 1st April 2021: the “Folklore for Future Learning Pack” for ages 3-10, using storytelling to explore the possibility of a greener, healthier future through; and “Preparing for a Just Transition” for Ages 13+, focused on discovering the opportunities and challenges Scotland faces in reducing our environmental impact.

*Q7.**What are your views on our approach to enabling participation in policy design?*

R7. The CLDSC sees all the activities outlined in Theme 2 of the strategy as positive and important. To achieve the type of society-wide change that the strategy aims for, other, additional ways of embedding engagement with climate issues into day-to-day activities of communities are needed. The basis for these could be provided by the type of dialogue-based communication strategy suggested in the responses to question 5. Engagement of this type needs to be supported by practitioners who work in an enabling and educative role with communities, which indicates that CLD practitioners should be core to the strategy. Many other public and voluntary sector staff can contribute to the type of engagement needed; CLD practitioners are best placed in terms of their skills and relationships with communities to co-ordinate activities and demonstrate good practice.

*Q8.**Are you aware of any practical examples or case studies of good practice for enabling participation in decision-making that could be useful for informing our approach?*

*Q9. What are your views on our approach to encouraging action?*

R9. We agree that supporting community climate action, supporting key messengers, supporting climate change education, connecting with nature, connecting to culture and heritage and promoting a place-based approach are important aspects of encouraging action on climate change issues; and that marketing campaigns focusing on the potential for people to take action on climate change have a place.

In relation to climate change education, the strategy comments that “In schools, climate change is addressed through the cross-cutting curriculum theme of Learning for Sustainability.” We would argue that Learning for Sustainability needs to be pre-eminently seen as a focus for lifelong learning (with the important work in schools being presented as a part of a lifelong engagement with climate change) and in particular to be embedded in the learning that takes place in communities. The forthcoming Lifelong Learning Statement provides an important means of strengthening the impact of Learning for Sustainability through a system-wide approach.

It is important to note that immediately before the pandemic and resulting lockdown, action aimed at bringing about changes at government and economy-wide levels to combat climate change was taking place, independently of “official” support or encouragement. We suggest that it is important for the strategy to signal that it is supportive of campaigning activity seeking positive responses to climate change, and complementary to it.

*Q10. Are you aware of any practical examples or case studies of good practice for encouraging climate change action that could be useful for informing our approach?*

The “Changing Tides, Making Waves” youth conference in November 2020 was jointly organised by the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR) North Sea Commission (which aims to “achieve a productive and sustainable, climate-neutral, connected and smart North Sea Region”) and the Northern Alliance Regional Improvement Collaborative. The conference focused on “Youth Participation Leading Positive Change Across The North Sea”; it was supported by CLD practitioners in the North East of Scotland and embodied approaches advocated in this response. The report on the conference is available here:

[Report from Youth Conference: Changing Tides and Making Waves. – CPMR North Sea Commission (cpmr-northsea.org)](https://cpmr-northsea.org/download/report-from-youth-conference-changing-tides-and-making-waves/)

*Q11. How do you think COP26 can help deliver a positive legacy for people of Scotland and climate action?*

R11. COP26 offers a major opportunity for learning, education and awareness-raising in relation to climate change and climate action. As in response to question 9 above, we believe that it is essential that this is approached as an opportunity for lifelong learning. CLD practitioners have a key role in engaging people of all ages in learning focused on how they can bring about positive changes in their lives, and specifically in relation to the issues that COP26 is seeking to address. This approach to educational work will stimulate active engagement for instance through the Green Zone and will be effective in engaging disadvantaged communities faced with many more obviously pressing issues. CLD practitioners are playing an important part in the work of Glasgow Science Centre in relation to COP26.

*Q12.**How can we work with stakeholders and actors across Scotland to deliver our “people” theme for COP26.*

R12. It will be important to work with existing networks and partnerships supporting community learning, engagement and participation, including CLD Partnerships, as well as those focused on climate issues. Linking effectively with these existing resources for collaboration will enable effective delivery and avoid ineffective and wasteful duplication of activity that could arise from seeking to establish new channels and groupings.

*Q13.**Are there other initiatives that the Scottish Government should consider joining or supporting ahead of COP26?*

*Q14. What are your views on how our progress towards our objectives could be most effectively monitored and evaluated?*

R14. Among a range of approaches including ways of evaluating changes in perception and involvement by the wider public, such as sample surveys, it will be important to seek feedback from the practitioners and “champions” that the Scottish Government is relying on for delivery of the strategy (see also response to question 15).

*Q15. How regularly – and in what format – should we report on progress on the strategy?*

R15. Annual reporting in a simple format may both allow time for significant progress and also support review and adjustment of the delivery of the strategy in the light of experience. Discussion of annual reports could provide a focus for feedback from practitioners and “champions”, as referred to in response to question 14, and, for example, from focus groups drawn from the wider public or from a sample of people already known to be engaged with climate issues.