# Scotland’s climate targets delayed as CCC urges urgent action on emissions



The UK’s Climate Change Committee (CCC) has issued a stark warning to the Scottish government, urging it to take "immediate action at pace and scale" to address its mounting emissions crisis. Following a series of policy reversals, including the abandonment of key climate targets, the CCC expressed grave concerns regarding Scotland's ability to achieve its net-zero emissions goal by 2045. The committee stressed that urgent measures in critical sectors, particularly in transport and building emissions, are essential for Scotland to fulfil its climate commitments.

Originally committed to reducing emissions by 75% by 2030, the Scottish government has now conceded that this goal will be delayed by up to six years due to chronic underperformance in meeting annual targets. This setback not only reflects poorly on the current administration, led by the Scottish National Party (SNP), but also marks an embarrassing retreat from earlier commitments that had garnered international attention. The committee's report noted that several ambitious pledges had been effectively shelved: targets to reduce car miles by 20% and mandate low-carbon heating systems in homes were both abandoned, alongside cuts in funding for tree planting and peatland restoration initiatives.

In a shift away from the previously legally binding annual targets, the Scottish government plans to introduce more flexible five-year carbon budgets. This model, already adopted by other UK administrations, is seen as a pragmatic, albeit controversial, response to the current climate strategy shortfalls. According to the CCC, Scotland must aim for a 57% reduction in emissions by 2030, escalating to a staggering 94% reduction by 2045, with the remaining emissions to be absorbed through natural carbon sinks like forestry and restored peatlands.

Critics, including opposition parties and environmental groups, have expressed dismay over the government's inability to align its actions with its proclamations on climate change. The Institute for Public Policy Research has called for the establishment of new "climate missions" to enforce accountability in sectors that contribute most to emissions, urging a departure from merely incentivising behavioural changes to implement more robust, enforceable policies.

Sarah Boyack, the net zero spokesperson for Scottish Labour, reiterated the urgency of the situation, stating, "The SNP has already torn up one set of targets; we urgently need a real plan to meet the Scottish government’s remaining targets." The CCC has highlighted specific areas where Scotland must act decisively: the rapid rollout of heat pumps, large-scale insulation of homes, bolstering low-carbon transport initiatives, and reforming planning to accelerate renewable energy deployment.

While the Scottish government still clings to its overarching aim of reaching net zero by 2045—more ambitious than the UK’s 2050 national target—it faces criticism for its current trajectory. Internal analyses suggest that Scotland could miss this net-zero goal by as much as 20 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalent unless substantial policy interventions are implemented. High-ranking officials have voiced deep concerns over the diminishing credibility of Scotland’s climate pledges, intensifying calls for immediate action to remedy the situation.

The political ramifications of Scotland's faltering climate strategy are significant. Tensions have already flared within the parliament, leading to the dissolution of a power-sharing agreement with the Scottish Green Party, with substantial pressure on First Minister Humza Yousaf to maintain his governance as criticism mounts. Opposition parties, rallying support to hold the government accountable, have accused the SNP of flipping on previously held green commitments, fuelling the perception of a government that overpromises and underdelivers.

As the debate continues, the CCC remains cautiously optimistic about Scotland’s ability to meet its 2045 target, contingent on swift and decisive action by the government. Amid escalating climate events, and record-breaking temperatures, the urgency for substantive policy measures has never been more critical. The choices made over the coming months will determine not only the Scottish government's legacy but the future of its environment and economy.

### Reference Map

* Paragraph 1: [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/may/21/watchdog-urges-scotland-to-take-action-after-repeatedly-missing-climate-targets), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/may/21/watchdog-urges-scotland-to-take-action-after-repeatedly-missing-climate-targets)
* Paragraph 2: [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/may/21/watchdog-urges-scotland-to-take-action-after-repeatedly-missing-climate-targets), [[4]](https://www.reuters.com/sustainability/climate-energy/scotland-ditches-climate-pledge-cut-emissions-by-75-by-2030-2024-04-18/), [[5]](https://www.ft.com/content/6960a200-2ccd-4279-ad1f-5ad1e749310d)
* Paragraph 3: [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/may/21/watchdog-urges-scotland-to-take-action-after-repeatedly-missing-climate-targets), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/may/21/watchdog-urges-scotland-to-take-action-after-repeatedly-missing-climate-targets), [[3]](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2024/mar/20/scotlands-pledge-cut-emissions-by-75-by-2030-no-longer-credible)
* Paragraph 4: [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/may/21/watchdog-urges-scotland-to-take-action-after-repeatedly-missing-climate-targets), [[5]](https://www.ft.com/content/6960a200-2ccd-4279-ad1f-5ad1e749310d)
* Paragraph 5: [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/may/21/watchdog-urges-scotland-to-take-action-after-repeatedly-missing-climate-targets), [[6]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/feb/23/scotland-likely-to-miss-net-zero-climate-target-by-up-to-20m-tonnes)
* Paragraph 6: [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/may/21/watchdog-urges-scotland-to-take-action-after-repeatedly-missing-climate-targets), [[4]](https://www.reuters.com/sustainability/climate-energy/scotland-ditches-climate-pledge-cut-emissions-by-75-by-2030-2024-04-18/), [[7]](https://www.apnews.com/article/04d95a6cc849dcfd13d4819db4c0ee9c)
* Paragraph 7: [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/may/21/watchdog-urges-scotland-to-take-action-after-repeatedly-missing-climate-targets), [[3]](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2024/mar/20/scotlands-pledge-cut-emissions-by-75-by-2030-no-longer-credible), [[4]](https://www.reuters.com/sustainability/climate-energy/scotland-ditches-climate-pledge-cut-emissions-by-75-by-2030-2024-04-18/)
* Paragraph 8: [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/may/21/watchdog-urges-scotland-to-take-action-after-repeatedly-missing-climate-targets), [[5]](https://www.ft.com/content/6960a200-2ccd-4279-ad1f-5ad1e749310d), [[7]](https://www.apnews.com/article/04d95a6cc849dcfd13d4819db4c0ee9c)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/may/21/watchdog-urges-scotland-to-take-action-after-repeatedly-missing-climate-targets> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/may/21/watchdog-urges-scotland-to-take-action-after-repeatedly-missing-climate-targets> - The UK's Climate Change Committee (CCC) has urged Scotland to take immediate action to reduce emissions after missing multiple climate targets. The CCC highlighted the need for urgent measures in buildings and transport sectors to achieve near-zero emissions by 2045. The Scottish government's original goal of a 75% emissions reduction by 2030 is now delayed by up to six years due to repeated annual target failures. The government has abandoned several pledges, including cutting car miles by 20% by 2030 and rapidly decarbonizing homes. They plan to replace annual targets with five-year carbon budgets, as recommended by the CCC.
3. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2024/mar/20/scotlands-pledge-cut-emissions-by-75-by-2030-no-longer-credible> - The UK's Climate Change Committee (CCC) has declared Scotland's pledge to reduce emissions by 75% by 2030 as no longer credible. The CCC cited delays in the updated climate change plan and slippage in promised policies, leaving Scotland without sufficient actions to reach the target. The report noted that Scotland missed its annual target for 2021 and that the required acceleration in emissions reduction is now beyond what is credible. The CCC emphasized the need for urgent publication of the climate change plan to assess its effectiveness.
4. <https://www.reuters.com/sustainability/climate-energy/scotland-ditches-climate-pledge-cut-emissions-by-75-by-2030-2024-04-18/> - Scotland has abandoned its ambitious target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 75% by 2030, citing limitations imposed by the British central government. However, it remains committed to achieving net-zero emissions by 2045. The decision follows a critical report from the Climate Change Committee (CCC), which highlighted Scotland's lag in meeting the 2030 target. Net Zero Secretary Mairi McAllan blamed cuts in capital funding from the British government and a general reduction in climate ambition. While Scotland controls some climate policies, key aspects like energy policy fall under British governance. The move has drawn criticism from environmental groups and the CCC for undermining long-term planning and diluting interim accountability. Despite the setback, Scotland's 2045 net-zero goal is still more ambitious than the UK's 2050 target.
5. <https://www.ft.com/content/6960a200-2ccd-4279-ad1f-5ad1e749310d> - Scotland has abandoned its ambitious climate target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 75% by 2030, assessed as unattainable by the UK's Climate Change Committee. This decision followed insufficient progress and was recognized as an 'embarrassing' retreat from earlier commitments. The UK target of a 68% reduction is also viewed with 'low confidence' of being met after policy reversals by Prime Minister Rishi Sunak. Despite shelving the 2030 goal, Scotland aims to maintain its commitment to achieving net-zero emissions by 2045. New measures include increasing electric vehicle charging points fourfold by 2030 and developing an integrated public transport ticketing system. Further, a carbon land tax proposal aims to incentivize peatland restoration and forestation. The setback comes after consecutive hottest months on record, indicating accelerated global warming. Criticism followed from Scottish Greens and Conservatives, labeling the move as reflective of the government's pattern of overpromising and underdelivering on environmental pledges. However, a substantial majority of Scots still support the 2045 net-zero target.
6. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/feb/23/scotland-likely-to-miss-net-zero-climate-target-by-up-to-20m-tonnes> - Internal official assessments suggest that Scotland is highly unlikely to meet its 2045 net-zero climate target, potentially missing it by 20 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalent. The projections indicate that Scotland will only be able to cut emissions by about half over the next 20 years. Senior officials and climate policy experts believe that past delays in cutting emissions make it improbable the 2045 target will be met. The Scottish government has been urged to take decisive action to meet its remaining targets.
7. <https://www.apnews.com/article/04d95a6cc849dcfd13d4819db4c0ee9c> - Scottish First Minister Humza Yousaf terminated a three-year power-sharing agreement with the Scottish Green Party over a climate change policy dispute, risking his political future. The Green Party, angered by Yousaf's abandonment of a key emissions reduction target, announced their no-confidence vote, aligning with other opposition parties. The vote could lead to Yousaf's resignation and potentially an early election. The SNP, holding 63 of the 129 Parliament seats, lacks a majority. Yousaf may require support from former SNP lawmaker Ash Regan to survive the vote. Ending the agreement amid financial controversies linked to former leader Nicola Sturgeon's husband, Yousaf's decision comes as SNP faces rising competition from Labour ahead of UK general elections.