

Response ID ANON-D55J-UCUM-J

Submitted to **Just Transition Commission - call for evidence**

Submitted on **2020-06-30 12:40:52**

Questions

1 What do you see as the main economic opportunities and challenges associated with meeting Scotland's climate change targets?

Please explain your view.:

We strongly believe that Scotland is wealthy enough and our people skilled and innovative enough to be able to meet, and to exceed, climate change targets and to reap the wider benefits of transitioning to a just, environmentally sustainable society. It is worth observing that Scotland and every other country have to make this transition. It is not a question of "can we?" but of "how will we?"

In our view, the biggest opportunity is that of enabling a 'bottom-up' transition, giving the people of Scotland the chance to hear and discuss the issues and options in order to inform how we proceed. This type of approach has been shown to work right here in Scotland. Before being postponed due to COVID-19, the Citizen's Assembly of Scotland had prioritised sustainability and tackling poverty. This 'mini-public', reflecting the diversity of views and backgrounds of people in Scotland, had explored using fairer taxation in order to make our country more environmentally sustainable.

Deliberative democracy does not replace representative democracy, but strengthens it. Through careful discussion, listening to a broad range of views from fellow participants and expert 'witnesses', the assembly was open to considering brave political choices that should encourage decision makers to go further than they have up till now. If some of the main challenges associated with a just transition are political, then deliberative democracy is an opportunity that can help overcome these challenges.

Taking a bottom-up approach also means devolving more decision-making to a local level. Community activism around climate change is already strong in Scotland. These organisations, and the wider array of community organisations, have the knowledge of, and reach into, their communities that enables them to respond to local needs and priorities. They are best placed to know what interventions are required now and in the future, and have a first-hand understanding of how different policies and decisions will affect the people they work with. Never has this been more evident as during the coronavirus pandemic, in which community organisations have rapidly and innovatively mobilised to support vulnerable people and minimise the impact of the virus.

Of course, community organisations need support, especially in our disadvantaged communities where there are fewer resources and existing organisation is thinner on the ground. The community climate hub model being considered in Scotland may be one opportunity to build on, and support community-led approaches to addressing climate change. To maximise this opportunity, climate hubs need to be community-led, with support to represent diversity and involve wider, more marginalised groups. They need to be given adequate power to control, utilise and protect local resources.

2 What do you think are the wider social (health, community, etc.) opportunities and challenges associated with meeting Scotland's climate change targets?

Please explain your view.:

There are clear, yet intricate links between climate and wider social issues. If we take the right approach to addressing climate change we can also improve other outcomes around health, wellbeing, community, employment and so on. The flipside of this is that wider wellbeing will be significantly reduced if we take the wrong approach to addressing climate change.

Climate change can be seen to have a bearing on many of other factors that affect our wellbeing. In addition to the immediate health effects of rising temperatures, the changing climate will have a major effect on the kinds of food we are able to grow, farm, import and produce. Any shortages and associated rise in cost will make it harder to have a healthy diet. Drought will contribute to food shortages as well as affecting our health more directly if clean water is in short supply. The adverse effects of climate change will be worst felt by already disadvantaged and excluded groups in our own society as well. Less affluent communities in Scotland are unlikely to be as resilient to extreme weather events as wealthier communities are. For example, they will have fewer financial resources available to help recover from local flooding.

Climate change also has an impact on communities, and how different communities respond will determine whether this has a positive or negative effect on health and wellbeing. As outlined in our response to the previous question, communities can take a lead role in addressing the climate emergency and its effects. Often, it is local people in communities that are first to respond and support each other in crisis situations such as flooding. Community activism addressing the causes of climate change is also strong. Through these activities and more, community organisations can bring people together around a common cause, with spin-off benefits in terms of health and wellbeing.

Climate change and inequality (health, social, financial) are rooted in the unfair structure of society and reflect wider social and economic inequalities. As another challenge that disadvantaged communities have to face, climate change (and its wider impact) is therefore likely to contribute to widening health inequalities. Secondly, climate change and health inequalities share the same root cause – our unsustainable economic system. Climate justice should now take its place alongside social and economic justice in our work. Another way of saying this is that we can't address one of these without the other.

3 What would a successful transition to net-zero emissions look like for your sector/community?

Please explain your view.:

As outlined in our response to question 1, we believe the community sector has a crucial part to play in a successful transition. Community development approaches bring the following benefits:

- Community development brings people together to understand and have more influence over what happens in and to their communities.

- Community-led organisations know and understand their communities and are well positioned to reach seldom-heard people and groups within the community, i.e. those most likely to suffer the effects of climate change.
- The participation of local communities, and communities of interest and identity, in addressing the issues that affect them increases social capital and community resilience which, in turn, increases the ability of people to influence what happens in and to their communities.
- Furthermore, stronger, more influential communities will be better able to challenge the unequal power relationships underlying our most pressing issues.

A successful transition along these lines would build the ability, resilience and sustainability of the community sector and the communities they serve.

Stronger partnership between community organisations and local public services would also be required. Our ongoing learning from local responses to Covid-19 is highlighting the importance of partnership between community-led and public sector responses. The public sector has a crucial role in supporting community-led responses in terms of co-ordination, safety and risk assessment, funding, capacity-building and co-producing services. Investing in this partnership is fundamental to addressing climate change and will also provide benefits in terms of joined-up efforts to address other social issues.

4 What actions do you think the Scottish Government should take to manage the opportunities and challenges referenced above?

Please explain your view.:

As we have set out above, the Scottish Government can take a 'bottom-up' more localised approach by investing in, and supporting the community sector and by continuing to build on deliberative democracy including delivering and listening to Scotland's planned citizens assembly on climate change.

In addition, political leadership is required that tackles multinational companies, some of whom are the worst polluters and who also actively maintain the political and economic system to suit their short-term interests.

5 Are there specific groups or communities that may be, or feel that they may be, adversely affected by a transition to a net-zero carbon economy? What steps can be taken to address their concerns?

Please explain your view.:

One of the key benefits of a bottom-up, democratic approach is that the voices of marginalised groups that are most impacted on by decisions can be heard. However, even these approaches will only be effective if everyone can take part equally. Support needs to be put in place to build the confidence and resilience of individuals to participate. Community organisations, using community development approaches, are well placed to facilitate vulnerable people with lived experience of inequality to be part of democratic processes.

Furthermore, community organisations do not exist in every part of Scotland and, where they do exist, they may not reach into marginalised groups within their own community. Some of the strongest and most active community organisations do work in and with our most disadvantaged communities. But it is important to recognise that funding, community capacity building and investment in partnership-building is needed to ensure a just transition.

6 Please provide here any other information, evidence, or research you consider relevant to the work of the Commission.

Please explain your view.:

About you

What is your name?

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Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?

Organisation

What is your organisation?

Organisation:

Scottish Community Development Centre

Does your response relate to a specific sector?

Please explain your view.:

The community sector