

# Quarterly Policy Briefing: Environmental Sustainability

## October 2022

This document outlines the main policy changes seen in the last quarter that will impact Scottish institutions and related EAUC-Scotland activity as a result.

### Scottish Policy Updates

- In June, the Scottish Government opened a [consultation on its Biodiversity Strategy](#), due for publication in 2022. This strategy will lead to the introduction of a Natural Environment Bill to transform the way we use and manage natural resources and address the biodiversity crisis.
- In August, Scotland became the first country to enshrine in law the right to free period products. Per the Period Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Act, Councils and education providers are now legally required to make these products available to anyone free of charge.
- Also in August, the [Scottish Green Public Sector Estate Decarbonisation Scheme](#) opened for applications. This Scottish Government scheme made £1 million of resource funding available to support studies into low carbon heat and energy efficiency projects in buildings owned by Scottish Central Government, including Further Education Colleges.
- Also in August, the Scottish Government opened its [dialogue challenge on the Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan](#). The plan aims to provide a vision and roadmap to Scotland's future energy system – taking a whole-system approach, aiming to build agreement and creating opportunities while reducing risk.
- Also in August, the Scottish Government closed its [consultation on the Circular Economy Bill](#). The results have yet to be published.
- In September, Audit Scotland published [Scotland's councils' approach to addressing climate change](#). This is the first time Audit Scotland has reviewed council responses to climate change and action and may well spread across the whole public sector. This positive step should lead to greater scrutiny of PBCCD reports and constructive discussions about access to capital funding and staffing resource.
- The [Net Zero Public Sector Buildings Standard](#) ("the Standard"), as published in November 2021 sets ambitious performance targets for New Build Projects. The Scottish Government is now extending the reach of the Standard to cover Existing Buildings. This is currently going through a peer review process led by the [Scottish Futures Trust](#). EAUC Scotland are supporting this peer review process with input

from Dr Roddy Yarr, Executive Lead Sustainability at the University of Strathclyde and Advisory Group Member.

## UK Policy Updates

- In July, the High Court deemed the UK Government's Net Zero Strategy "unlawful". The ruling states that the Government's strategy failed to detail sufficient measures to deliver the Net Zero goal, thus breaching the Climate Change Act. The government will now be required to update the strategy to show how its policies will achieve the Net Zero goal, as well as cover the costs of the environmental campaign groups that lodged the challenge – ClientEarth, the Good Law Project and Friends of the Earth.
- In August, the Office for National Statistics opened a [consultation on Defining and Measuring Green Jobs](#).
- With the commencement of Lizz Truss's Premiership in September, she announced a significant package of fiscal intervention and a Cabinet reshuffle.
  - The Climate Change Committee (CCC) and the National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) [called](#) for Truss to introduce policies promoting renewable energy, building efficiency upgrades and low-carbon heat
  - A group of 29 MPs and peers from the All Party Parliamentary Group for the Environment [wrote](#) to Truss asking her to recommit to Net Zero
  - The government was also [warned](#) that the energy crisis package failed to address home energy efficiency
- In September, the UK Government announced the [Energy Bill Relief Scheme for non-domestic customers](#), fixing prices at £211 per megawatt-hour (MWh) for electricity and £75 per MWh for gas. Shortly following this, [the moratorium on shale gas exploration was lifted and the government confirmed its support for new oil and gas licensing](#).

## Other Updates

- Signatories to the Glasgow agreement at COP26 committed to "revisit and strengthen" their 2030 climate plans by 23rd September 2022. However, as this deadline passed, [just 23 of the nearly 200 signatories had submitted updated 2030 climate plans](#) (including the UK).
- [Prime Minister Liz Truss has advised King Charles III to not attend the COP27 summit](#), where he was due to give a speech to world leaders. This has prompted concern that the government will water down its commitment to Net Zero.