



31 March 2021

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Dear Sir/Madam,

### **Draft Public Engagement Strategy for Climate Change**

Scottish Water welcomes the opportunity to comment on the above draft strategy.

Our response addresses the key questions relevant to Scottish Water (questions 1-4 and question 9), and makes some further points on the importance of working with us in areas such as water efficiency (taking less from the environment, using water wisely), with some examples which we believe may be useful.

#### **General comments**

We are committed to supporting the Scottish Government in delivering its net zero emissions goal, and our own commitment and route map to net zero were published in September last year ([www.scottishwaternetzero.co.uk](http://www.scottishwaternetzero.co.uk)).

Public engagement, in the approach and actions needed to deliver net zero, is critical, with Scotland's Climate Change Plan highlighting the significant shifts required across society in areas such as domestic heating, transport, and land management.

Customer engagement has been a key activity used to develop our Strategic Plan, published in early 2020. Through this our customers highlighted how important climate change was to them, as well as taking action to address our emissions and ensuring services are resilient to a changing climate. This resonates with the views reflected in appendix B of the consultation document, and the consultation rightly focuses on how this may be turned into action.

We support the vision set out in the document and believe it is essential that people understand the implications for them, their communities, and the actions that they may be expected to take. This understanding will, in turn, help to deliver the policies and proposals developed to meet future emissions reduction targets.

Climate change impacts strongly on the water environment and in society's relationship with water – from water scarcity to flooding. Water use across society can also drive significant emissions. It is important we consistently raise awareness and understanding of the carbon and climate change implications of water use in the home and beyond, and help people

understand how they can respond. We see this as a key opportunity to work together across multiple organisations.

The appendix to this letter gives examples of how Scottish Water might contribute to this and highlights the value of our messages being consistent with the Scottish Government's climate change engagement objectives.

## **Specific Comments**

### ***Question 1: 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?***

We agree with the 3 objectives on *awareness*, *participation* and *taking action*, and suggest the awareness objective should focus more on the level of understanding people have of the implications of progressing to net zero emissions.

Providing simple examples of what this might mean for heating a home, making journeys, and managing landscapes in the near term would be helpful in supporting this understanding.

### ***Question 2: 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?***

We agrees with the 7 principles set out in box 1, and believes it is crucial that engagement leads with a positive vision of what we are seeking to achieve (principle 1), and that it is "people centric" (principle 2). In line with our comment above on the importance of understanding the implications of progressing to net zero emissions, we suggest principle 2 could be strengthened by including a requirement to make clear what net zero, climate change adaptation, and the implication of the actions they need to take means for individuals and communities. This would help to facilitate constructive engagement and feedback.

### ***Question 3. Do you have any other comments on our overall approach?***

One of the actions to deliver the "Communicating Climate Change Policy" strategic objective outlines a commitment to working with Adaptation Scotland on communication. However, the strategy might benefit from a clearer description of the scope of this. The document references adaptation but tends to focus on the greenhouse gas reduction elements of the Climate Change Plan. We believe that two separate approaches are required - one for adaptation and another for mitigation. It is important these themes are not confused when engaging with the public.

Scottish Water would be very keen to engage further on adaptation as, in the case of water and drainage, this is a multi-agency issue.



***Question 4: What are your views on the opportunities and challenges for public engagement in the Green Recovery?***

The consultation rightly calls out the role that the green recovery can play in supporting the just transition, and the identifies key initiatives arising from the Low Carbon Fund. The principal opportunities from our perspective are to understand how we might promote more collaborative working across agencies and with communities to address issues such as:

*Urban drainage* – ensuring land use planning makes space for water in a changing climate. We have been developing partnerships with local authorities and others to address current and future drainage and flooding challenges, and with a focus on placemaking and nature based solutions in the urban environment there is a great opportunity for further engagement with people and communities.

*Affordable heat* – heat from sewers is now providing benefits to public and private buildings in a small number of places around Scotland. Such schemes require extensive partnership and engagement, and with the challenge to decarbonise heat, increased engagement on the role of distributed heat systems may enable the identification of further such schemes.

*Land use change* – the goal to increase Scotland’s carbon sink brings with it opportunities to create investment in the rural economy, and to create places for nature and recreation that support adaptation and mitigation. Community engagement is critical – change cannot be ‘done to’ communities; building a level of understanding and support for the actions we need to take with communities and land operators is critical.

Scottish Water has ambitious plans to grow its carbon sink which means we need to engage widely with communities and land operators across operational forestry and agricultural lands. We would be keen to discuss best practice approaches to engaging stakeholder groups further.

***Question 9 – what are your views on our approach to encouraging action?***

We strongly support the approaches set out in the document, particularly education, place-based approaches, and connecting with nature.

The goal to build capacity through education could be further strengthened if businesses were engaged to help shape the key areas of knowledge and understanding needed to address climate change. Growing the carbon and climate literacy of current and future workforces would accelerate the actions required across society to manage emissions. This could be in the form of guidance, simple carbon tools, and making carbon data visible in products and services. We have been developing approaches with our supply chain partners and would be happy to share learning.

Place-based approaches are key to delivering adaptation and mitigation in the landscape, and we would welcome a greater understanding of good practice in place-based engagement.

Connecting with nature is strongly linked with place-based approaches. For example, developing a wider awareness of: the connectedness between nature/biodiversity, the ecosystem services on which we depend; the role nature plays in mitigation and adaptation; and the benefits to recreation, the economy and wellbeing, are all important in provoking the wider adoption of these climate solutions.



We would be pleased to engage further on the points mentioned in this letter in the hope that water efficiency can, ultimately, be included in the Public Engagement Strategy. Please use the email address above in the first instance if you wish to send further information or speak to us in more detail about our response.

Yours faithfully

Simon Parsons  
Director Strategic Customer Service Planning

**Encs – Appendix - Potential for Further Engagement on Water Efficiency**



## **Appendix – Potential for Further Engagement on Water Efficiency**

### **Importance of Water Efficiency in Reducing Carbon Emissions**

Water efficiency reduces carbon emissions emitted from water and wastewater production, treatment, and transport; and from water heated in the home. It can also reduce the amount of water abstracted from the environment, minimising our impact on freshwater ecosystems, and increasing Scotland's resilience to changing weather patterns.

Water efficiency is one of a range of tools for mitigating against, and adapting to, climate change. Scottish Water would very much welcome water efficiency being included in the Public Engagement Strategy as a Key Sustainable Behaviour, alongside energy efficiency, food waste reduction, active travel etc.

We would like water efficiency to be part of any engagement initiatives deployed as part of this strategy e.g. by including it in the Net Zero Nation website and the Sustainability Curriculum. We can assist with the development of water efficiency tips and advice.

### **Arran Case Study**

Scottish Water worked in partnership with Home Energy Scotland and the local community group, [Arran Eco Savvy](#), to deliver water efficiency advice and devices to households on Arran. This supported Arran Eco Savvy's existing carbon and sustainability goals for the island.

We worked with Arran Eco Savvy to deliver information about Arran's local water resources as well as why and how to save water. A key aspect of this campaign was demonstrating that not only could water efficiency support local water resource resilience, but also help individuals save on their energy bills and reduce their carbon footprint.

As we were unable to arrange community events due to COVID-19 restrictions, the engagement primarily took place online and included; a virtual film night hosted by Arran Eco Savvy, newspaper articles and advertising, postcard drops, social media posts and advertising, water butt competitions and online webinars hosted by Home Energy Scotland.

To date water saving packs consisting of advice and devices have been delivered to over 200 Arran households. We are currently carrying out a survey to gain feedback from campaign participants and can share these results when available. High level campaign information can be found here: [www.scottishwater.co.uk/savewaterarran](http://www.scottishwater.co.uk/savewaterarran).

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