**Just Transition Commission - Call for Evidence**

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June 2020

**Age Scotland’s response to the Just Transition Commission’s Call for Evidence following the publication of their Interim Report in February 2020, this will influence their final recommendations to the Scottish Government in January 2021. The Just Transition Commission was established by Scottish Ministers to provide practical recommendations to the Scottish Government that will aim to ensure that the transition to a net-zero emission economy is fair across society and provides economic opportunities for all.**

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

As the transition to a net-zero emissions economy progresses, the main economic opportunities will rely on ensuring that opportunities for participating in reskilling and creating new sources of employment throughout Scotland are maximised.

The opportunity to eliminate fuel poverty and improve the quality of life of thousands of people across Scotland, who live in homes that they cannot afford to keep warm enough, should be a central tenet of the Just Transition Commission’s work.

The potential economic challenges from the transition to a net-zero emissions economy could have disproportionate impacts on some groups in society, including older people, and in particular older people who live in remote and rural areas.

Transitioning to cleaner fuels used in public transport while still keeping rural transport as a viable and affordable service for people to use will be essential. If local authorities decide that rural transport networks are too expensive to maintain, then the rates of social isolation will rise significantly and will have a clear detrimental impact on older people who live in these areas, who are more reliant on these services.

To ensure that the public is communicated with as changes are made across the board,

it will be essential that traditional forms of communication are used as well as digital ones to ensure that the public is communicated with in an inclusive manner, otherwise a significant tranche of older people will be digitally excluded. According to ONS figures, there are over 500,000 people over 60 in Scotland who do not use the internet. This is a significant number that must not be overlooked or left uniformed during the transition to a net zero society.

A significant challenge will be how much individuals will be expected to pay towards energy efficiency measures, for example. We are concerned about assumptions about ability to pay based on home ownership.

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

One of the main priorities during the transition to a net-zero economy needs to be the energy efficiency of Scotland’s housing stock. Fuel poverty causes serious physical and mental health problems and must be eradicated in our transition to a net-zero emissions society. We know that fuel poverty, and especially extreme fuel poverty, is a considerable problem for Scotland’s older households. 4 in 10 older households live in fuel poverty, and older households are twice as likely to live in extreme fuel poverty as families (Scottish Household Survey 2018, Key Findings Report). In addition to this, rates of extreme fuel poverty are higher in rural areas than in urban (17% compared to 10% - also from the Scottish Household Survey 2018), which means that the needs for support in combating fuel poverty will vary based on location.

It is important that it is not assumed that older people will be able to afford the energy efficiency measures that their properties will require to bring them to a higher EPC band – 31% of older owner-occupiers live in fuel poverty (Scottish Household Survey 2018). There is a real opportunity to tangibly improve many people’s quality of lives by improving the energy efficiency of their homes and lowering fuel bills. There will, however, need to be substantial Scottish Government investment through grants and loans that will help people to meet the costs required to improve the energy efficiency of their properties.

There’s an opportunity to improve intergenerational attitudes through engaging whole communities to develop their response to the net-zero transition and to make sure that their views are incorporated into local changes. It is, however, essential that communication does not only take place digitally. In general, younger people may be more aware of the climate emergency and moving to new technology may be more challenging for older people. Communities must be provided with forums to discuss how they will achieve more energy efficient outcomes, and examples such as the care home in Aberdeenshire in the Commission’s report that moved to district heating with great success should be what we are aiming for when we engage community groups – better outcomes for local people and more climate friendly energy production.

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

It is essential that the transition to net-zero emissions is inclusive to everyone, with the opportunities it presents open to all. It would mean the eradication of fuel poverty in all areas of the country, with remote and rural areas currently experiencing the highest rates of extreme fuel poverty (Scottish Housing Survey, 2018). 4 in 10 older households currently experience fuel poverty, and that rises to 6 in 10 of older single person households (Scottish Housing Survey, 2018). Age Scotland conducted some research into older people’s views on housing and we found that fuel poverty is a serious cause of anxiety for many older people: 20% of respondents always struggled or sometimes struggled to pay their fuel bills, and this rises to 27% of respondents who have a long-term health condition and 35% of those with a disability (Age Scotland, [www.age.scot/housingreport2020](http://www.age.scot/housingreport2020) ).

It would need to involve people from the whole community – ‘co-producing’ solutions, so that people would feel as though they had buy-in and a say in the ways in which their communities will need to change to meet net-zero emissions.

In the Commission’s interim report, it is mentioned that the community in Kincardine did not feel as though their views were taken into account. It is essential that communities are involved in the transition to a net zero economy, especially when the local area has traditionally been employed by an industry that is being phased out and is undergoing a significant change as part of this transition.

In line with this, investment in people in terms of creating jobs in the local area and providing opportunities for people to re-train to acquire the skills required. It will be important that investment in people is not age-restricted, as people aged over 50 should be given the opportunity to retrain and work in these sectors too.

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

The Scottish Government should set targets linked to funding that it will make available to local authorities related to the transition to a net-zero economy, such as for skills training or for community projects. This funding should be conditional on the inclusivity and outreach of all schemes and include the need to report on the action taken to reach groups that have protected status, such as older people. The model could be similar to that of the Planning (Scotland) Act, where there is a requirement to demonstrate how older and disabled people have been consulted with for various planning decisions.

**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?**

Older people could be adversely affected by the transition to a net-zero economy if assumptions are made about the affordability and their understanding of the changes that need to be made. As many older people live on a fixed income, it is highly likely that many will not have the capital available that will be necessary to improve the energy efficiency of their homes. The costs associated with installing the energy efficiency measures required to bring owner occupier homes to the required EPC levels cannot just be borne by households. Many older people are home-owners but this does not necessarily mean they have much disposable income, which often means they are asset rich but income poor.

Care and Repair Scotland is a set of charities based in 27 of Scotland's local authorities, that provide a trusted trader service to older people and ensure that they can access handy-person support at low-cost to help with work around their homes. Currently, there is not a consistent level of Care and Repair support available across the different local authority areas of Scotland. It is for the local authority to decide the level of provision that the local Care and Repair can provide, with some offering grants and subsidised loans for the work that older owner occupiers need for their homes, and some local authorities not providing the service at all.

It will make a significant difference to the transition and adaptation to a net-zero economy if older owner occupiers across Scotland have an easily identifiable organisation that they can turn to for support. It would be even better if this organisation had adequate funding to provide a similar level of service across Scotland.

Age Scotland would call upon the Just Transition Commission to strongly recommend that more funding be attributed to Care and Repair in order to achieve this and that the Scottish Government consider targets for local authorities to ensure that their financial support of Care and Repair is more consistent across Scotland.

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

The Scottish Government programmes that are designed to help individuals with energy efficiency measures for their homes are not well known among Scotland’s older population. Age Scotland recently published a report following their national housing survey, and it shows that over half of the older people surveyed had not heard of the Scottish Government’s energy efficiency programmes, with Home Energy Scotland being the most recognised with 28% of respondents saying they had heard of it. The report can be found here: age.scot/housingreport2020

The housing report also demonstrates the impact that fuel poverty has on older people as mentioned in the response above: 20% of respondents struggled all or some of the time to pay their energy bills. Age Scotland also found that 54% of respondents were concerned about rising energy prices in the future (age.scot/housingreport2020 )

It is important that the Commission takes into account the need to inform the public about all aspects of the transition to net-zero and of the support that will be available to them during the process. The information campaigns themselves are almost as important as the support available, especially among older people many of whom do not use the internet and are less likely to know where to find support. Information should be disseminated through traditional channels, such as the post but also having leaflets available at GP surgeries, libraries and community venues will also be important.

**Want to find out more?**

As Scotland’s national charity supporting people over the age of 50, Age Scotland works to improve older people’s lives and promote their rights and interests. We aim to help people love later life, whatever their circumstances. We want Scotland to be the best place in the world to grow older.

Our Policy, Communications and Campaigns team research, analyse and comment on a wide range of public policy issues affecting older people in Scotland.

Our work is guided by the views and needs of older people themselves.

**Further information**

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