

**6 December 2023**

**Press release**

## **Environmental Standards Scotland secures positive change in the delivery of local authorities' climate change duties.**

Environmental Standards Scotland (ESS) has issued an improvement report to the Scottish Government, following its investigation into the support provided to local authorities in their duty to contribute to the delivery of climate change targets.

The report, published today (6 December 2023), sets out evidence of weaknesses with the support that is available to local authorities in how they deliver their climate change duties, and the reporting and monitoring of performance.

Key findings within the ESS report include:

- there is no legal obligation for local authorities to produce climate plans
- there is currently no legal obligation on local authorities to report on Scope 3 emissions, which are the largest proportion of greenhouse gas emissions
- Scottish Government guidance to local authorities is either out of date, or non-statutory, and there is no single, comprehensive, up-to-date, accessible source for climate practitioners
- there is no evidence that local authorities' climate change delivery is monitored against reported progress, evaluated or scrutinised, despite there being a legal mechanism to do so

Following ESS' investigation, the Scottish Government has agreed to make a number of changes which will clarify how local authorities implement their climate change duties. The Scottish Government has also agreed to strengthen the reporting system and the monitoring of performance in this area.

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In response to the report, the Scottish Government must prepare an improvement plan setting out how it intends to implement ESS' recommendation that local authorities must report on the largest proportion of their emissions. The Scottish Government has to present this plan to the Scottish Parliament for approval.

Mark Roberts, Chief Executive of ESS, said:

“The effects of climate change are increasingly clear. Continuing to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to meet Scotland’s targets is critical. Local authorities have a central leadership role for addressing climate change and are a major contributor to the public sector’s total reported emissions. There must be effective systems in place to help them in this.

The changes made as a result of ESS’ recommendations will strengthen the operational and governance arrangements for climate change duties and lead to enhanced transparency, support and accountability.”

You can read the full report, findings and recommendations on the [ESS website](#).

Ends.

### **About Environmental Standards Scotland (ESS):**

1. Environmental Standards Scotland (ESS) began its formal operations on October 2021, as part of the UK Withdrawal from the European Union (Continuity) (Scotland) Act 2021, following the UK’s departure from the European Union. ESS is responsible for ensuring Scotland’s public authorities, including government and its agencies, are compliant with environmental law.
  2. ESS is independent of Scottish Government, but accountable to the Scottish Parliament. ESS scrutinises public authorities’ compliance with environmental
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law, the effectiveness of these laws and the way they are implemented and applied and has statutory powers to act where required.

3. ESS launched this investigation in 2022 following receipt of a representation.

**For more information, visit:** [environmentalstandards.scot](https://environmentalstandards.scot)

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