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Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee

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Dear Convener

SCOTTISH BUDGET 2025-26

Thank you for your letter of 5 July 2024, in which you requested details on how the Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) Portfolio will ensure spending decisions are focused on contributing to the Climate Change Committee's "balanced pathway" to a net-zero Scotland by 2045.

The First Minister has made tackling the climate crisis one of his top priorities for the Scottish Government, and Scottish Ministers have an unwavering commitment to a just transition to net zero emissions by 2045, which is five years ahead of the UK, and is still one of the most ambitious targets in the world. I would like to highlight that Scotland's emissions halved between 1990 and 2022, while our economy grew by 67%. This was the largest reduction in emissions in the UK, and we decarbonised faster than the average of the EU27.

In this year's budget (2024-25) the Scottish Government committed £4.7 billion towards activities that will have a positive impact on the delivery of our climate change goals, but with the Scottish Government capital budget expected to reduce by 9% by 2027-28, which is equivalent to a cumulative loss of over £1.3 billion, this has added to an already challenging fiscal environment. We will however continue to support businesses and people so they can share in the enormous economic and job opportunities of the global transition to net zero.

The Scottish Government is currently considering its approach to the 2025-26 Scottish Budget, and details will be available when it is published. The Scottish Government will continue to work closely with the Scottish Parliament to agree a date for the 2025-26 Scottish Budget, now that the Chancellor has confirmed the date of the next UK Budget.

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Justice and Home Affairs Portfolio

The estimated emissions associated with the Justice and Home Affairs Portfolio expenditure is less than 5% of the overall Scottish Government total estimated emissions. Nevertheless, in developing the Justice and Home Affairs budget, I can assure you that we take the issue of reducing carbon emissions very seriously. The organisations which make up the justice system prioritise their budgets, and they are all committed to taking actions to reduce the carbon footprint of their core activities. We therefore have a number of programmes underway across the portfolio which are contributing positively to reducing our carbon emissions. These are largely focused around changes in working practices, reducing travel requirements, better use of technology, property improvements to deliver a more efficient justice estate, and decarbonising the fleet across the justice organisations. Examples of these programmes are detailed below.

Estate

The largest capital investment in the JHA Portfolio is funding the commitment to build two new prisons, HMP Highland and HMP Glasgow, both of which will replace ageing and inefficient prison infrastructure, with modern, energy efficient buildings.

HMP Highland

HMP Highland is being developed to support the Scottish Government's National Infrastructure Mission, to drive inclusive economic growth and build resilient places. The site will be zero direct emissions on opening, with fossil fuels used only in an emergency situation for back-up power/heat generation.

The approach at HMP Highland to achieve this has been to reduce operational energy use, starting with reducing the building energy demand through a fabric first approach and move to a fully electric solution. The buildings are highly efficient with improved air tightness and insulation values, with high efficiency electrical equipment used throughout, including kitchen equipment and heat recovery ventilation. The heating and hot water demand will be provided by a ground source heat pump system, through 122 boreholes on site. Part of the site electrical demand is generated via roof mounted solar photovoltaic panels.

To meet the 2045 target the site is being designed to allow for additional renewable integration such as district heating, micro-wind turbines and further solar photovoltaic panels.

HMP Glasgow

The Scottish Prisons Service (SPS) has awarded a pre-construction services agreement contract to Kier Construction, with whom it has formed a strategic partnership to develop the design of HMP Glasgow. Part of the work has involved development of a strategy which looks at all achievable aspects in relation to sustainability across construction and operation. This includes bio-diversity and climate adaptation. There is also a focus on the development of an Energy Strategy which aligns to SPS and the Scottish Government's targets on net zero and zero direct emissions. SPS will apply to Net Zero Public Sector Building Standards (NZPSB) for HMP Glasgow, with work informed by the project's Sustainability Strategy group.

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Wider Justice Estate

There is a range of positive work underway to decarbonise the wider justice estate, including across the rest of the prison estate, with all organisations seeking to increase the efficiency of their estates. This includes installation of modern heating systems, installation of solar panels and other renewable energy sources, improved methods of energy monitoring to help guide consumption reduction measures, lighting upgrades to replace aging energy intensive systems and low carbon retrofits. An example of this is Edinburgh High Court which has benefited from window upgrades, installation of solar panels, LED lighting, and metering upgrades, as well as enhanced carbon dioxide monitoring.

The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) is in the design phase for a number of new fire stations which, when they are delivered, will offer a significant reduction in carbon emissions due to their highly insulated building fabric, electrically fuelled heating systems and onsite renewable generation. The design of the new Portree fire station will be a pilot for future rural and remote community fire stations, which will become community resilience hubs offering carbon neutral, energy efficient, and appropriate facilities to support communities and partnership co-location, as well as providing fire service cover.

In support of its Estate Strategy, Police Scotland is currently developing an estate masterplan, which is identifying key buildings for retention and investment, and properties which are no longer required will be considered for disposal. This will form the basis of the organisations' future investment requirements to deliver a fit for purpose modern and energy efficient estate, that enables the needs of modern policing, in a safe and sustainable manner.

Fleet

Police Scotland the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) both have major programmes underway to decarbonise their fleet. Although largely focused on light fleet, this also includes investing in more efficient frontline fire appliances for SFRS to replace end of life vehicles.

Police Scotland's fleet strategy is highly ambitious, with the aim of having the UK's first ultra-low emission blue light fleet by 2030. Currently 30% (around 1200 vehicles) of the police fleet are ultra-low emissions vehicles (ULEV), with plans underway to increase this further during 2024-25.

Technology

Investment in new technologies, is enabling new ways of working and of improving service delivery across the Justice system. The move to hybrid working across the justice organisations through investment in technology has already led to a significant reduction in journeys made.

The introduction of the facility for police and expert witnesses to submit their evidence in High Court trials remotely, has freed up time for these important workers, alongside eliminating the need for travel to and from the courts to provide evidence. The wide scale move to virtual hearings for the majority of procedural matters in civil court business has significantly reduced the need for parties and agents to attend courts across Scotland to attend short hearings, saving thousands of journeys each year. Work is ongoing to explore greater use of virtual appearances from custody in order to reduce prisoner transport.

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The SFRS is developing an internet network which will allow remote access and control of building heating controls, utility meters and the EV charging network to better monitor energy performance across all its sites, reducing unnecessary travel, which will reduce costs and carbon emissions.

The roll out of the Digital Evidence Sharing Capability (DESC) across the justice system will not only increase the efficiency of the justice system, it will also lead to a reduction in the need to store physical evidence and to transport it between sites, leading to further journey reductions.

I hope this provides reassurance to you and the Committee that the JHA Portfolio is committed to making its contribution to the Scottish Government's pathway to a net zero Scotland by 2045, and I trust that this information will be helpful for your pre-budget scrutiny work.

ANGELA CONSTANCE

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