



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

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Member of the Scottish Parliament for Highlands & Islands

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Thank you for contacting me about climate change and Scotland's environmental commitments.

The Scottish Conservatives believe few things are as urgent as tackling the climate emergency and preventing its disastrous consequences for people all over the world, so we support Scotland's ambition to reach net-zero emissions by 2045.

Our natural environment is Scotland's greatest asset, and we must do everything we can to protect it so that it can be enjoyed by future generations. In recent decades we have experienced a catastrophic loss of species and their habitats, accelerated by climate change. That's why the Scottish Conservatives support plans for an ambitious Nature Bill to strengthen environmental protections on land, in our rivers and at sea - so that we can reverse the decline in native species.

The Scottish Conservatives also want to preserve Scotland's natural landscape and biodiversity. In our 2021 manifesto we committed to increase new tree planting in Scotland to 18,000 hectares annually. We would also strengthen protections for the Green Belt and establish Nature Networks across Scotland to better safeguard protected areas.

With respect to fossil fuels, while there remains a demand, we believe we should source as much oil and gas domestically to save importing it at greater cost and with a higher carbon footprint and our transition away from these energy sources should not put jobs, particularly in the North East of Scotland, at risk.

In our 2021 manifesto, we put forward plans to back business and create green jobs to meet our climate targets. This included a Help to Renovate scheme that would offer loans and grants to support the transition to energy efficiency.

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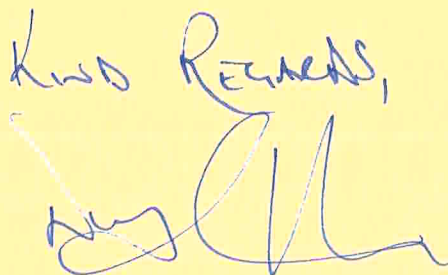
Disappointingly, the SNP Government keep making grand promises to tackle the climate crisis - but time and again they miss their own targets. I was disappointed that they have once again missed their own legal emission targets for 2023 and have only hit their targets once over the past seven years. It is also concerning that the Climate Change Committee's recent progress report outlined the SNP Government have missed seven out of eleven of their own climate targets.

Agriculture is central to Scotland's environmental commitments and net-zero goals. However, several years after it was known that Scotland would need a new agricultural policy, the SNP Government have still not decided on what will come next for our farmers. By contrast, the Scottish Conservatives' plan for 'Scotland's Food Future' will not only help the country reach its net-zero targets in a sustainable manner, but help to secure agricultural funding and support the latest technological advances to ensure that Scotland has a sustainable food supply.

The Scottish Conservatives believe that Scotland's marine environment should also be protected for future generations to ensure its sustainability in the long term. Scotland currently has 37% of its waters protected. Unlike the recently postponed HPMA proposals, future marine protections should be guided by science and discussed with local communities as this is the best approach to ensure sustainable protection for our seas.

The UK has made already great strides towards reaching our net-zero goals and environmental commitments. However, I appreciate there is a huge amount left to do – that's why the Scottish Conservatives will always hold the SNP Government to account for their record. Likewise, we will continue to promote policies that ensure that our net-zero and environmental commitments are reached in a fair and sustainable way.

I hope this answers the points you raised with me, and many thanks for raising this vital issues.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Douglas Ross', with a stylized flourish at the end.

DOUGLAS ROSS MP MSP