

News release

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Government must improve climate set up

The Scottish Government needs to improve its set up to deliver the country's climate change goals.

The government's climate governance has improved since the former First Minister declared a climate emergency in 2019. However, adapting to the impact of climate change has received less focus than reducing emissions and hitting net zero targets.

The government is not clear enough on how its internal groups co-ordinate their work. There are gaps in reporting, making it difficult to assess progress against climate policy. And there has been no workforce plan for climate change since the Net Zero department was established in late 2021. However, one is expected in spring 2023.

Government risk management arrangements around climate change are underdeveloped. For example, the process to identify risks is not always clear. Actions to address risks are sometimes vague. And there is not a systematic process in place for tracking actions in risk registers.

Stephen Boyle, Auditor General for Scotland, said:

"The Scottish Government's set up for responding to the climate crisis has constantly evolved since 2019. But the different parts of government could be better co-ordinated.

"The government's risk management arrangements also need to improve, particularly the work needed to ensure Scotland adapts to the impact of climate change.

"Work is ongoing across the Scottish Government to tackle these organisational weaknesses, and it's vital that happens quickly given the urgency of the climate situation."

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Notes to Editor:

1. The Scottish Government's risk management arrangements for climate change are underdeveloped. For example, failure to adapt to the impact of climate change is a longer-term risk that requires action now. But it is not prioritised as highly as emissions reductions risks. This mirrors the government's greater governance focus on reducing emissions over adapting to the impacts of climate change.

2. The performance audit did not look at Scottish Government governance arrangements beyond how it is set up to address the climate crisis.

3. Audit Scotland has prepared this report for the Auditor General for Scotland. All Audit Scotland reports published since 2000 are available at www.audit-scotland.gov.uk

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