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## News release

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### Energy efficiency drive in public bodies needs greater urgency

Scotland's public bodies need to cut their energy use to minimise the impact of predicted price rises and to reduce carbon emissions, says Audit Scotland.

A report published today, *Improving energy efficiency: a follow-up*, says that in the two years since Audit Scotland last reported on this subject, action has been taken at both national and local levels. The Scottish Government has recently published an action plan to improve energy efficiency, and 85 per cent of public bodies now have energy efficiency strategies. However, today's report says that greater urgency is now needed.

In the three years to March 2009, public bodies' energy use increased by one per cent overall but spending on electricity, gas and oil rose by 21 per cent. In 2008/09 the public sector spent more than £322 million on energy. While energy prices have dropped recently, they are forecast to start rising again. Scotland's public bodies are also expected to contribute towards ambitious national targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Auditor General for Scotland Robert Black said: "Energy efficiency is important for the public sector both financially and environmentally. Public bodies spend significant amounts of public money on energy and should be leading by example in acting to reduce emissions.

"The energy performance of public sector buildings presents challenges for improving energy efficiency, at a time when Scotland is facing reductions in capital investment. The Scottish Government should target its efforts and investment where the biggest reductions in energy use and emissions can be made for the whole public sector. It also needs to ensure that its action plan is robust enough to achieve the pace of change needed."

Accounts Commission for Scotland chair John Baillie said: "There is no doubt that Scotland's councils are working hard to improve their energy efficiency and treat the issue with the importance it deserves. In recent years councils have reduced their emissions, and it is encouraging to see that over 90 per cent of councils have strategies in place to improve energy efficiency.

"However, councils account for more than half of the public sector's energy use, and have an important role in driving and increasing the pace of change. They need to work with the Scottish Government to implement its energy efficiency action plan, and ensure they are collecting accurate information on transport use and resultant emissions."

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#### Notes to Editors:

1. The Scottish Government published an action plan in October 2010, setting out its approach to improving energy efficiency across Scotland. It includes actions aimed at reducing energy use in public sector buildings, improving the monitoring and reporting of performance and using existing funding for energy efficiency measures more effectively. For more information, see [Conserve and Save: The Energy Efficiency Action Plan for Scotland](#) on the Scottish Government's website.
2. National policy developments since December 2008 include: The Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 sets targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 42 per cent by 2020 and 80 per cent by 2050; compulsory display of Energy Performance Certificates, showing the energy performance of a building, in all large public buildings since January 2009; and the start of the UK-wide CRC Energy Efficiency Scheme (CRC) in April 2010, a compulsory scheme aimed at improving efficiency and reducing CO2 emissions.

3. This report follows up an Audit Scotland report published in 2008, [\*Improving energy efficiency\*](#), available on Audit Scotland's website.
4. All Audit Scotland reports published since 2000 can be found on Audit Scotland's website [www.audit-scotland.gov.uk](http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk)
5. Audit Scotland is a statutory body set up in April 2000, under the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act, 2000. Audit Scotland has prepared this report jointly for the Auditor General for Scotland and the Accounts Commission for Scotland:
  - The Auditor General is responsible for securing the audit of the Scottish Government and most other public bodies in Scotland, except local authorities. He investigates whether spending bodies achieve the best possible value for money and adhere to the highest standards of financial management. The Auditor General is independent and is not subject to the control of the Scottish Government or the Scottish Parliament.
  - The Accounts Commission for Scotland was set up in 1975 and is independent of both central and local government. The commission checks whether local authorities, fire and police boards spend £9 billion of public money properly and effectively.