



Scottish Climate Change National Adaptation Plan: Consultation Response

Achieving climate resilience and maximising health co-benefits

1. Through investments in green and blue infrastructure

[Data from the 2023](#) global report of the Lancet Countdown shows that, out of the ten UK urban centres housing more than 500,000 people, none had high levels of green space, six had moderate levels of greenness, and four had low levels. Inequalities in access to green and blue spaces are exacerbating health inequities.

[The elderly](#) are particularly vulnerable to adverse health impacts of heat exposure. With its ageing population, an [expected 67%](#) increase in people aged 75 and above between 2020 and 2045, Scotland is at particular risk from climate change-related adverse health outcomes. However, nature-based solutions have proven to lessen the effect of increasing temperatures. These can reduce heat exposure and help reduce the number of heat-related deaths while providing other immediate benefits to the health and quality of life of UK populations. A systematic review of studies concentrated in Europe and temperate regions found that park and garden areas were 0.8°C cooler than urban non-green areas, with trees having a significant impact on this cooling during the day. Park and garden cooling effects were found to reach up to 1.25km.

[Most NHS GPs](#) believe that social green prescriptions (referring people to local nature-based interventions and activities, such as walking schemes and conservation volunteering, to benefit their health) and the presence of trees can help reduce the burden of diseases such as asthma and bring down costs of the NHS. Green and blue spaces enable physical activity and help reduce obesity and related diseases. They also have a positive impact on mental health and well-being.

2. Ensuring everyone lives in healthy homes

There are growing concerns due to a rise in average global temperatures and in 2022, the UK witnessed some of the highest recorded temperatures in its history with [Scotland experiencing](#) maximum temperatures of 35°C. The frequency and intensity of periods of heat is going to increase in the next decades with the UK experiencing temperatures over 40°C [every few years by 2100](#). England has a Heatwave Plan in place to prepare, alert and prevent health impacts from severe heat. A [similar national plan for Scotland](#) needs to be in place.

The [World Economic Forum](#) has estimated that 80% of the buildings present today will exist in 2050. Thus, it is essential that buildings are retrofitted to become energy-efficient and carbon-neutral. The health impact of poorly insulated houses is massive. Hence, healthy

homes for everyone in Scotland need to be prioritised. Healthy homes that are energy efficient, and well insulated to protect from cold winters while having adequate ventilation to ensure there is no overheating in periods of heat. Upgrading homes to provide better insulation and ventilation would provide significant short-term and long-term relief to the cost-of-living crisis, reduce carbon emissions, and improve health.

3. Through building climate-resilient health systems in Scotland and internationally

Uninterrupted and good quality health and care service provision during climate-related extreme weather events such as floods, storms, heatwaves, cold waves, sea level rise, wildfires and droughts is essential. [By 2100](#), an additional 9 million deaths per year may occur as a result of climate-related causes. As the climate crisis intensifies, healthcare facilities need to be resilient, adapt and tackle the adverse impacts on health. A climate-resilient health system is also vital to achieve universal health coverage and ensure health equity.

Challenges such as water scarcity, increased exposure to high temperatures, risk of transmission of infectious diseases, disruption of power supply due to extreme weather events, and supply chain breakage are going to become more frequent. Health systems in Scotland and around the world need to anticipate, manage and recover from such climate-related events. An operational framework for building climate-resilient health systems developed by [the World Health Organisation](#) provides guidance on how to systematically adapt health systems to the climate crisis.

The Scottish Government can support vulnerable international communities, especially low and middle-income countries, to build climate-resilient health systems through capacity building, financial support, relevant research and infrastructure renovations and retrofits.