Report into Climate Change Training in Scottish Local Government

Net Zero Scotland
Scottish Government

SSN Sustainable Scotland Network

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Contents

Introduction

This report presents the findings of research carried out between January and March 2023 by the Improvement Service (IS) on behalf of the Scottish Government and the Sustainable Scotland Network (SSN) to explore the current landscape in Scotland of climate change training in local authorities. The goals of this research were to:

▶ Gather evidence on climate change training and engagement resources local authorities are using for behaviour change and awareness raising,

▶ Identify needs for further resources or support,

▶ Share best practice and promote knowledge sharing with communications, community engagement and organisational development colleagues, and

▶ Develop an action plan for future support

The research was undertaken in three stages:

1. A desk-based review of existing resources including literature review and an online survey with climate change, organisational development, communications, and other officers within local authorities. 54 responses were received to the survey, representing 28 local authorities in total. The survey provided information on resources currently being used and explored some of the issues and opportunities that these provide. The full list of survey questions is included in Appendix C.

2. A series of online workshops with council officers. There were 49 attendees across three sessions and included colleagues from a number of service areas beyond climate change, most notably a high number of communications officers. The workshops allowed for further conversation and discussion of some of the issues raised within the survey including the resources that are currently in place, what works, what the challenges and barriers are, and what further support and collaboration might be required in future between local authorities and national organisations and across service areas within the local authorities.

3. Interviews with external organisations working in this area, such as the Local Government Association in England, the Local Government Information Unit, Sniffer/Adaptation Scotland and Zero Waste Scotland.

Throughout the research a number of common themes and challenges have emerged and these have been used to develop proposed actions to support local authority work in this area going forward.

Who will deliver these actions?

A central theme that has strongly emerged from the research is the importance of collaboration between organisations including different levels of government and across policy areas such as climate change mitigation, adaptation, engagement and green skills. There is a central role for organisations like the Improvement Service and the Sustainable Scotland Network in facilitating and coordinating this collaboration and ensuring that actions are delivered for all of local government. The actions outlined in this report are therefore not targeted at any one body but will require input from across the sector including the Scottish Government, COSLA, IS, the SSN, and individual local authorities.

Evidence of resources currently being used

Our survey asked local authorities to first identify the resources they use for delivering climate change training. There were many examples used for internal audiences and external audiences, such as communities. The full list is included as Appendix A. Figure 1 shows a summary of the resources used internally grouped by type and based on the proportion of survey respondents using each resource. As shown in the graph, Carbon Literacy was the most commonly used resource, although there were a range of providers including Keep Scotland Beautiful (KSB), Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE), and the Scottish Cities Alliance (SCA) and Improvement Service (IS). While delivery may differ slightly, these all draw on the same source material and have the same core content.

Resources used externally were more likely to be internally developed, often adapting Carbon Literacy courses for the local area.

Figure 1: Internal climate training resources – percentages are of survey respondents
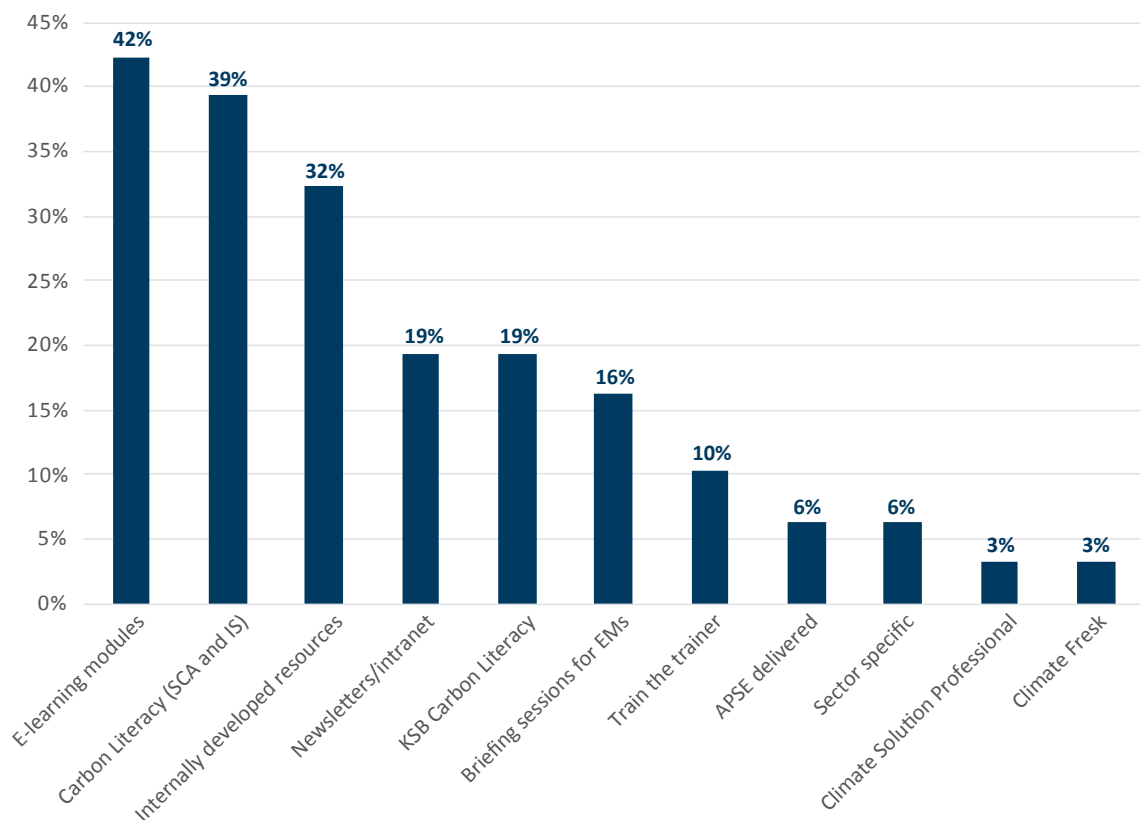
Key themes and actions

The feedback gathered through the survey workshops, and interviews highlighted four thematic areas where additional support is required.

1. Standardised guidance and resources

Given the wide range of available and utilised resources for climate change training, one of the central themes emerging from our research was the need for some level of standardisation and guidance at a national level. This included guidance on which resources to employ when working with different audiences depending on their role, such as elected members or those working in frontline service delivery.

Research participants mentioned they would welcome a range of content that can be tailored to the audience, as well as different delivery methods, such as facilitated in-person and online sessions or self-guided materials.

Action – Develop guidance on resources and approaches

A flowchart outlining best practice approaches to delivering climate change training should be developed. The flowchart would cover considerations and available resources throughout the process of delivering training. This would also include the initial planning phase, such as considering goals and outcomes, selecting and targeting the audience, and how to reach them.

Our research explored some of the key factors in delivering impactful training to promote behaviour change. These included knowing the audience and their needs, effectively framing resources, particularly in identifying local case studies, and promoting and outlining achievable actions. The flowchart should support local authorities in considering these questions. The flowchart should also provide suggestions for specific resources that can be used depending on the goals and audiences that are being engaged. This would achieve the goal of this theme of providing a standardised set of training resources to streamline and declutter the landscape, but provide flexibility based on the goals and audiences of the local authority. Local authorities could therefore select from a menu of standardised resources to meet the specific training needs for their local authority and their audience.

Research participants identified many effective approaches to delivering climate change training, as well as approaches that do not work well. This evidence base should be used to inform the final version.

Based on the research, we have prepared an outline for this flowchart in Appendix B. This will require testing with stakeholders and to be updated and amended based on further feedback.

2. Promoting collaboration: co-benefits and shared priorities

Survey respondents and workshop attendees highlighted the value in providing spaces for discussion that facilitate collaboration, sharing of resources, and the sharing and implementation of best practice. Climate change officers and others identified the benefit of hearing what other local authorities have in place. This would help to identify best practice and promote sharing of lessons and resources.

Research participants were also keen to stress the holistic nature of tackling the climate crisis and the importance of recognising that all services have a role to play. Research participants noted that the public sector as a whole has a duty to deliver the required change, given the state of emergency. Within the survey 30% of local authorities said that their training is mandatory for local authority employees. Some respondents noted, however that mandatory training is often poorly received. While more participants complete the training, they may therefore be less likely to fully engage with the material.

It was also recognised that there were benefits for other service areas from increased awareness of climate change and its impacts. This was recognised as a potentially effective means of encouraging cross-service engagement. Collaboration and dialogue between services areas could therefore help to promote climate change training by highlighting where there are shared priorities and mutual benefits. It was recognised that there would be benefit for a broad range of services such as community planning, economic development, planning, housing, transport and others. The value of climate change resources in place making or in community planning, where climate change resources could promote improved outcomes for communities, was given as an example. Another similar example was within economic development where it was suggested that a just transition to net zero would seek to maximise the widespread economic benefit of the growth of the green economy.

In addition, there are collaboration opportunities with supporting services such as communications, community engagement, and organisational development. For example, there may be opportunity to use existing community engagement events to promote climate change training and messages, while climate change also represents a topic which many in the community are keen to engage in. For communications colleagues, climate change training and other resources may represent a helpful route for promoting the work of the local authority.

Action – Promote and develop mechanisms and forums for collaboration and discussion

Work should be taken forward to promote and provide spaces that bring together colleagues working across different local authorities and service areas. This may include specific areas or topics of focus, such as rural groups, communications, organisational development and others. In some cases, these networks may already exist and we would suggest engagement with them to highlight the importance and co-benefits that a climate lens and climate training can bring. For other areas these networks may need to be created. The attendees at the workshops held as part of this research may offer a useful cohort through which new networks could be established, given the high level of engagement in this topic and range of service areas represented.

Central to this theme would be ensuring that this is an ongoing process and not a series of one-off events or workshops. This may require a central resource to organise these forums on a regular basis.

3. Promoting collaboration: delivery models

A further theme, identified in the survey and workshops was the limited resource that local authorities have for assessing, developing, procuring, and delivering climate training resources. These limits included staff time, available financial resources, and skills. Research participants noted that it would be helpful to seek opportunities for collaborative models of delivering training and for accessing resources. This would identify other agencies, organisations, or council staff who can support in the delivery of climate change training to reduce the expectation that local authority climate change officers are solely responsible for delivering this. This could include organisations from across the public sector, such as professional networks, as well as the third and private sectors.

Local authorities also noted that there can be some reluctance to engage with them on this topic. Instead, delivery by external organisations who can act as "trusted messengers", with the local authority providing materials and support, is often especially effective in communicating with communities. Community groups and the public in general often see these bodies as an "impartial" source of information and show more willingness to engage. It was also noted that locally tailored training is most effective and that local groups are well placed to deliver this. It is possible that this approach could therefore more effectively attract audiences and deliver positive change.

Research respondents also noted that it can be difficult to deliver training or outreach programmes to the community, as the ideal times to do this can be outwith local authority working hours. Community groups and others may also offer more flexibility and scope for delivering at times and through channels more suitable for some audiences outwith the local authority.

Councils noted that it is important to make clear that responsibility to deliver on net zero ambitions lies in part outwith the local authority. It is therefore important to bring in other organisations and groups to help the public, businesses, and others to recognise this.

As well as local resources, research respondents were also keen to draw on national resources for support in delivering this training. Respondents felt that events delivered by national organisations may have a greater reach and could be advertised more effectively to a greater cohort than would interact with local authority delivered sessions. It was mentioned that climate action hubs may be a suitable route for achieving this at a regional level, recognising that full Scotland coverage does not yet exist.

A gap identified in the research was evaluating the effectiveness and impact of any training or campaign. This was primarily due to a lack of capacity including both skills and time. In order to help ensure that activities deliver the intended impact, a greater level of evaluation would provide an evidence base for testing whether goals had been delivered. There would therefore be value in identifying where there might be resource to support these activities either within local authorities or from other organisations including the Improvement Service.

> **Action –** Provide guidance outlining colleagues, organisations, and modes of delivery that can be consulted to support with co-delivery of training provision

Local authorities could be provided with further guidance for exploring potential opportunities for co-delivery of training and engagement sessions. This would provide suggestions for organisations that may be able to offer support, such as community bodies, national organisations, and other local authority service areas. The goal of this document would be to prompt and guide local authority climate change officers in accessing support for delivering training. Whereas the purpose of action 1 will be to identify relevant climate change training materials, this guidance would focus on identifying delivery partners.

Within the guidance different options would be presented based on the audience the training is targeted to. This would include, for example, audiences within the local authority where organisational development officers may be best placed to support, or in the community where there could be local or national organisations able to support with delivery. Within this guidance there could also be an opportunity for national organisations to promote the services they offer.

As noted, the ability to undertake evaluation of the effectiveness and impact of training is a major gap. The guidance should also provide some suggestions for how to undertake evaluation or organisations who could support in this area.

As with the above action, this would need to be an ongoing process. It could, for example, be updated with case studies and best practice guides from across local authorities on a regular basis.

4. Communications alignment and support

The final theme was a need for greater communications support. This included greater collaboration within local authorities between communications and climate change departments, as mentioned above, but also between national and local communications campaigns.

As noted above, workshop participants expressed willingness and desire to see more join up between local authority communications and climate change services. This included integrated communications plans so that climate change training and messages were better coordinated, joint meetings, and even specific climate change communication routes, such as dedicated websites.

The impact and reach of national communications was noted throughout the research. This was particularly focused at the Scottish Government, but included input from organisations such as the SSN, COSLA and the IS. Research participants noted that national messaging had been effective in promoting behaviour change across other service and priority areas, for example in stopping smoking, recycling, and more recently in the support that is available for those struggling with the cost of living. The Covid pandemic was also cited by several respondents with a strong national message emphasising the urgency and importance of action. It was felt by some that the Scottish Government and others could have a consistent and clear national message emphasising the urgency and importance, as well as the co-benefits, of transition to net zero, similar to the sense of importance generated during the pandemic. This would not just act to raise awareness, but also to promote positive action and where possible engagement with local authority resources.

The importance of building in local messaging was also highlighted, with support required from national partners to allow local authorities to maximise the opportunities presented by the national campaign. As noted above, local messaging was seen as a central element of delivering effective training and engagement that could influence behaviour change. It was viewed as important, therefore, that any national campaign allows space and support for the provision of local messaging and context to make it relevant to people and their communities.

This approach could improve the reach and impact of climate training. For climate change officers there could be an opportunity to reduce the time spent delivering and developing training resources and therefore to spend the limited time they have in other areas.

Action – Developing national campaigns where local authorities can align messaging, adapt resources, and improve engagement

National campaigns should continue to be developed to promote awareness and engagement in climate change as a theme, as well as promote the availability and participation in climate change training. As these campaigns are developed and

delivered consideration should be given to the support local authorities require to deliver these messages to local audiences and to provide materials so that their impact can be maximised. This could build on existing national campaigns, such as Net Zero Nation, ensuring that local authorities have what they require to build on these locally..

Responsibility for developing the local messaging would remain with the local authority, but with additional guidance on how to do this effectively. To support with this, a national series of communications messages and event dates could be adapted and integrated into local communications plans, allowing local areas to build on the wider reach of the national messaging, but targeted to a local audience.

Further examples of the support provided to local authorities to build on national campaigns could include communications guides; pre-planned event and campaign dates, similar to Earth Hour; communication materials, including ideas for events and resources that could be utilised, such as datasets; and guidance on how to make the campaign relevant to a local area or community, for example by providing local examples. Local authorities would then be expected to use these in engaging their own local communities.

COSLA and other local government bodies, such as SOLACE and IS could play a role in coordinating input from local government and encouraging communications services to play an active role in applying the messages locally. These organisations could also gather local authority views on the types of support required to make national campaigns most effective in local contexts. This, together with the forums suggested in the action above, would provide a driver for ensuring that communications and climate change officers are further connected and to explore opportunities to work together.

Appendix A

Resources used for training

Internal

Keep Scotland Beautiful Carbon Literacy

Carbon Literacy Project Carbon Literacy

Scottish Cities Alliance Carbon Literacy

IS Carbon Literacy

E-learning - including in-house developed

KSB e-learning

Induction module

Adaptation benchmarking

Get clued up on carbon - online course

UN SDG localisation learning kit

Sustainable procurement training

Climate solution professional

Internal communications - including Yammer, intranet, email

Change today e-learning

EM/staff briefings

TrainEasy internal programme

Learning management system

Internally developed online module

Train the trainer carbon literacy

APSE carbon literacy

Civil contingencies awareness elearning

Risk management elearning

Risk assessment in practice elearning

EM CPD - "Climate Emergency"

Information sessions run by officers or external organisations

tressllo eLearning

Climate Fresk

External

Climate Cafes and Climate Conversations

Step Up to Net Zero Business placements and circularity assessment

Collaboration with Crowdfunder to run Climate Challenge Fund.

Stakeholder engagement, including surveys, climate panel, local community partnership meetings, invitation from local groups

Via Council social media channels

Internally developed

KSB Carbon Literacy

Sniffer provided resources

Monthly Junior Ranger sessions including practical meadow management and heritage asset management delivered in partnership with Nectar Networks (IGNN) and HES.

Delivery of twice weekly volunteer sessions

Outdoor experience lending kits to education at the recent Inset learning session delivered by STEM team. A variety of themed kits are available to support teachers, community groups and families explore and learn more about their natural environment (e.g. Bat detector kit, pond dipping, birdwatching)

Second year of 'Go Wild' Literacy in the outdoors schools project. Additional STEM resources have been included for this year. A key aspect of this is exploring local areas and using guides/ID keys to Identify species in different habitats.

Planning to deliver a project to primary schools and young person's community groups, focussing on topics tailored around North Ayrshire to make it more "local" to provide a clearer idea of what the Council is doing around their towns. Topics will include: solar farms, recycling centres, green transport, local green space etc.

The Corporate Procurement Unit (CPU) team members utilise the Scottish Government Sustainable Procurement Tools and complete the Introduction to Sustainable Public Procurement, Climate Literacy and Circular Procurement and Supply e-Learning courses. All new starts and existing staff members complete and refresh as appropriate.

Science for a successful Scotland

Ranger service

We have designed and deliver Carbon Literacy for Scottish Communities.

Appendix B

Flowchart of resources

Do you know why you want to communicate about climate change?

Statutory Duty

What aspect of climate change do you need to focus on?
What does success look like?
How will you measure impact?

Do you know your audience? Who has the biggest impact and who do you need to prioritise?

All Local Authority Staff *Target key service areas*	**Senior Officers** *Decision making and leadership Influencing*	**Elected Members** *Decision making and leadership Community engagement Influencing*	**Local Communities** *Behaviour change Empowerment*	**Local Businesses** *Behaviour change Influencing Supply chain*	Are there gaps in the resources or training offers?

All Local Authority Staff

Carbon Literacy for Local Authorities*
Climate Fresk
Energy Saving Trust
Adaptation Scotland resources
Climate Resilience Training
Sustainable Procurement Tools
Supply Chain Procurement School
Climate Solutions
Climate Just
Every Job a Climate Job
Communications Guide

Senior Officers

Carbon Literacy for Senior Leaders*
Adaptation Scotland resources
Climate Solutions
SSN Leadership Checklist

Elected Members

Carbon Literacy for Elected Members*
Adaptation Scotland resources
LGIU

Local Communities

Climate Fresk
SCCAN and Climate Action Hubs
Net Zero Nation
Climate Conversation Pack
ISM Guide
PST Climate Lens
Community Climate Adaptation Roadmap
Community Impact Tool

Local Businesses

Scottish Business Climate Collaboration
Climate Solutions
Climate Resilience Training

Are there gaps in the resources or training offers?

Who could help you fill this gap? e.g. Adaptation Scotland, SSN, the Improvement Service, Scottish Futures Trust, Zero Waste Scotland, NatureScot

Do you know the best way to reach your audience?

✓ Different forms of communication and influence e.g. professional networks
✓ A 'menu' or programme tailored to what people need with ongoing support
✓ Online or face to face – accessibility
✓ National perspective/local focus
✓ Shared delivery options

Note Carbon Literacy can be delivered in house with all materials provided and a small fee per head for certification (and licensing from Oct). Otherwise there are providers such as APSE, Keep Scotland Beautiful, threepointfive and Great Places.

Appendix C

Survey questions

2. Please select your local authority

3. What is your role?

Climate policy

Organisational development

Community development/engagement

Communications

Other (please specify):

4. Which audiences are you responsible for delivering training to (if you do not deliver training please select "neither")?

Internal audiences within the Council

External audiences (such as communities)

Both

Neither

3. Internal Training Resources

These questions relate to your internal training resources - that is those delivered and directed at employees within your local authority.

5. Please list any resources or approaches you currently use for training and awareness raising. SSN publish a list of resources that may help you answer this question here.

6. Who is this training delivered to? (Select all that apply)

Senior leaders

Elected Members

Existing staff within climate related services

New starts within climate related services,

Existing staff in all services

New starts in all services

Other (please specify):

7. How do you deliver this training (this may be, for example, guided group sessions or self-directed learning)?

8. What are the goals for delivering this training? (Select all that apply)

It has been mandated by the council

To improve council communications

To encourage awareness/understanding

To encourage behavioural change

To help the Council meet its Net Zero ambitions

Other (please specify):

9. How effective are these resources in delivering these goals?

Very effective

Somewhat effective

Neither effective nor ineffective

Somewhat ineffective

Very ineffective

Please explain your answer

10. Please list any other training resources or approaches you are aware of but do not currently use. For each, please also briefly explain why you do not make use of it.

11. Are there gaps in the available training resources (this might include gaps in training content or in delivery modes, such as in-person training)?

12. What would improve the impact of the training you deliver (this could include the resources available to you as well as other support, for example with communications)?

13. If you have any resources or examples that you would be willing to share please add these here. These resources will be added to the SSN KHub. You can also send these to research@improvementservice.org.uk

4. External Training Resources

These questions relate to the training that you deliver and direct to external audiences, for example community groups or community planning partners.

14. Please list any resources you currently use for training and awareness raising. SSN publish a list of resources that may help you answer this question here.

15. Who is this training delivered to? (Select all that apply)

Senior leaders in external organisations including community planning partners

Operational staff in external organisations including community planning partners

Businesses

Communities or community organisations,

Local networks and partnerships

Third sector interface

Other (please specify):

16. How do you deliver this training (this may be, for example, guided group sessions or self-directed learning)?

17. What are the goals for delivering this training? (Select all that apply)

To raise awareness and understanding of climate change

To encourage and support action by individuals and organisations

To encourage and support collaboration on climate action projects

To encourage behaviour change

Other (please specify):

18. How effective are these resources in delivering these goals?

Very effective

Somewhat effective

Neither effective nor ineffective

Somewhat ineffective

Very ineffective

Please explain your answer

19. Please list any other training resources or approaches you are aware of but do not currently use. For each, please also briefly explain why you do not make use of it.

20. Are there gaps in the available training resources (this might include gaps in training content or in delivery modes, such as in-person training)?

21. What would improve the impact of the training you deliver (this could include the resources available to you as well as other support, for example with communications)?

22. If you have any resources or examples that you would be willing to share please add these here. These resources will be added to the SSN KHub. You can also send these to research@improvementservice.org.uk

5. Communications Questions

These questions ask about your role in communications in relation to climate change.

23. How confident do you feel in communicating around about climate change?

Very confident

Quite confident

Neither confident nor not confident

Not so confident

Not at all confident

24. What are the barriers or limiting factors to your communications work in this area?

25. Please list any resources that you have used for communicating around climate change.

26. Please list any other resources or approaches you are aware of, but do not currently use. For each please say why you do not currently use this.

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