

It's our planet too:

Climate change, disabled people and climate action in Scotland



**Inclusion
Scotland**

Disabled People's Organisation

Our voices ■ Our choices

www.inclusionscotland.org

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1. Introduction

Climate change is considered by many people, including many disabled people, to be the defining issue of our time. However, despite disabled people constituting 15% of the world's population, their rights, needs and perspectives have been systematically neglected in international, national and local responses to a changing climate.^{1 2}

From shifting weather patterns that threaten food production, to rising sea levels that increase the risk of flooding, the impacts of climate change are global in scope and unprecedented in scale.

Climate change is already inflicting a dizzying array of harms globally, including increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, melting of glaciers and ice sheets, rising sea levels, droughts, wildfires, increased air pollution, water shortages, the destruction of ecosystems, biodiversity loss, and the spread of water-borne and vector-borne disease.

Human influence on the climate system is now an established fact: the Fourth Assessment Report (AR4) from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), created to provide policymakers with regular scientific assessments on climate change, stated in 2007 that 'warming of the climate system is unequivocal', and its Fifth Assessment report stated in 2013 that 'human influence on the climate system is clear'.

In its latest assessment report in August of this year (AR6), the IPCC stated that 'the

increase of CO₂, methane and nitrous oxide in the atmosphere over the industrial era is the result of human activities and that human influence is the principal driver of many changes observed across the atmosphere, ocean, cryosphere and biosphere'³.

The report spells out the latest science on climate change, and what we can expect to happen over the coming decades and centuries. Without very significant reductions in greenhouse gases over the next decades, the Sixth Assessment Report concludes that it is likely that global surface temperatures will exceed 1.5°C. Even if emissions were curtailed, sea levels will almost certainly continue to rise throughout this century and may continue to rise for centuries or millennia beyond that.

Extreme weather events – particularly heatwaves and heavy rains – have become more frequent since 1950 and will become more frequent and more severe as global temperatures increase. The IPCC in its latest report warns that we will not be able to limit global warming to even 2°C unless there are immediate, rapid and large-scale reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.



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In this context, legislation, plans, initiatives and finance at the international, national and local scale aimed at limiting carbon emissions, reducing waste, combatting plastic pollution and creating a circular economy will likely be the backbone of policymaking in many countries for the foreseeable future.

Mitigating and adapting to climate change will lead to initiatives that will impact on many aspects of disabled people's everyday lives in relation to a wide range of policy areas – urban and infrastructure planning, housing, transport, energy efficiency, waste management, risk management and emergency planning to name a few.

However, at present, Inclusion Scotland has identified that despite international recognition of the greater vulnerability of disabled people to climate impacts, disability issues have received little attention from practitioners and policymakers internationally and in the context of climate governance in Scotland.

This report aims to highlight the potential impacts of climate change for disabled people, our experiences of being alienated from the discourse about climate change, or actively disadvantaged by climate action, and what our priorities for climate action are, as disabled Scots, ahead of the UN Climate Change Conference, COP26, hosted by Glasgow in November 2021.



1 Jodoin, Sébastien, Katherine Lofts, and Nilani Ananthamoorthy (2020). 'A Disability Rights Approach to Climate Governance.' Ecology Law Quarterly 47 (1).

2 Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (2020). 'Analytical Study on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the Context of Climate Change.' <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/44/30>

3 IPCC The Sixth Assessment Report 'Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis' https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_WGI_Full_Report.pdf

2. Climate justice and disabled people

'Climate justice' is a term used to understand climate change as an ethical and political issue, rather just purely environmental or physical in nature. Climate justice examines concepts such as equality, human rights, collective rights, and the historical responsibilities for climate change. A growing climate justice movement is now emphasising that impacts of climate change are not felt equally. ^{4 5}

Around the world, disabled people are being hit hard by extreme weather events. Bigger wildfires, longer droughts, and more intense storms and floods can be catastrophic for some disabled people, who are more likely to be marginalised by poverty and other social barriers that make them less likely to be evacuated safely, more prone to health risks and less likely to have insurance that protects their assets and homes.⁶

As the Covid-19 pandemic has shown, disabled people are often among those most adversely affected in an emergency, sustaining disproportionately higher rates of morbidity and mortality, and are among those least able to access emergency support.^{7 8}

Around the world, sudden-onset natural disasters and extreme weather events such as heatwaves and floods can seriously affect disabled people's access to food and nutrition, safe drinking water and sanitation, health-care services and medicines, education and training, adequate housing and access to decent work.⁹

This is not just an issue for disabled people in the developing world. We saw in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in America that federal and community evacuation warnings, shelters and emergency transport were not accessible to disabled people,^{10 11} and as a result, significant numbers of disabled people drowned in their own homes or in nursing homes.^{12 13}

4 El Gibbs (2019) 'Calling for Climate Justice for Disabled People' <https://www.croakey.org/calling-for-climate-justice-for-disabled-people/>

5 Alex Ghenis (2017) 'Climate Adaptation, Adaptive Climate Justice, and People with Disabilities' <https://blog.ucsusa.org/guest-commentary/climate-adaptation-adaptive-climate-justice-and-people-with-disabilities>

6 Julia Watts Belser (2019) 'Disabled People Cannot Be "Expected Losses" in the Climate Crisis.'

7 David Perry (2017) 'Disability and Disaster Response in the Age of Climate Change' <https://psmag.com/environment/fixing-americas-disability-disaster-response>

8 Alex Ghenis (2016) 'The End of the World As We Know It' <https://www.newmobility.com/2016/03/climate-change-and-disability/>

9 Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (2020) 'Analytical Study on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the Context of Climate Change.' <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/44/30>

10 National Council on Disability (2006) 'The Impact of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita on People with Disabilities: A Look Back and Remaining Challenges' <https://nacd.gov/publications/2006/Aug072006>

11 Robin Scher (2017) 'The Disabled Are Probably the Most Vulnerable to Climate Change Effects' <https://www.truthdig.com/articles/the-disabled-are-probably-the-most-vulnerable-to-climate-change-effects/>

12 New York Times (2015) 'Louisiana's Deadly Storm Took Strong as Well as the Helpless' <https://www.nytimes.com/2005/12/18/us/louisianas-deadly-storm-took-strong-as-well-as-the-helpless.html>

13 Finger, Anne (2005) 'Hurricane Katrina, Race, Class, Tragedy, and Charity' Disability Studies Quarterly, Volume 25, No. 4 <https://dsq-sds.org/article/view/630/807>



Despite this growing recognition that disabled people will be hardest hit by extreme weather events, alarmingly,

85%
**OF DISABLED PEOPLE
FROM 137 COUNTRIES**

reported in a 2013 UN survey that they have not participated or been consulted in community disaster management processes.



We are already seeing the impact of the global climate **CRISIS IN SCOTLAND** with warmer temperatures, more extreme weather events, rising sea levels, flooding and the subsequent impact on the health and prosperity of Scottish society and the economy.



It is estimated that around one in six houses in the UK are at some risk of flooding, with the new National Flood Risk Assessment suggesting

284,000 PROPERTIES
in Scotland are vulnerable to rising river and sea levels.

It is estimated that every degree of warming in Scotland will cost the Scottish economy

1% OF GROSS
domestic product – in effect, eliminating the prospect of growing the economy.



Ground floor and level access properties, required by many disabled people with mobility impairments, will be particularly vulnerable to flooding, as are many nursing and residential homes which have been built on

FLOOD PLAINS.

3. Climate change and our human rights

There are international laws and frameworks which make clear that disabled people's human rights should be protected in our responses to a changing climate.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol were agreed in December 2006 following decades of work by civil society, disability activists and the United Nations to move disabled people away from being considered as objects of charity to independent individuals capable of exercising their rights and making decisions about issues that affect their lives.

Article 3 of the CRPD sets out the general principles that underpin all of the rights inherent in activating disabled people's active engagement with and participation in society, including: respect for inherent dignity; individual autonomy (including the freedom to make one's own choices, and independence of persons); non-discrimination; full and effective participation and inclusion in society; respect for difference and acceptance of disabled people as equal citizens; equality of opportunity and accessibility.

Articles 4 (3) and General Comment 7 oblige all State Parties to actively ensure 'the effective and meaningful participation of disabled people, through their representative organisations'. This participation is 'at the heart of the Convention'. The general comment goes on to say (paragraph 11) that disabled people's organisations (DPOs) 'can only be those that are led, directed and governed by persons with disabilities' and that 'a clear majority of their membership should be recruited among persons with disabilities themselves'.

General Comment 7 also says that State Parties and public authorities should prioritise disabled people's views, through their DPOs, and that they should support the capacity and empowerment of DPOs. This is to ensure that 'priority is given to ascertaining' the views of disabled people and DPOs in decision-making and monitoring processes (paragraphs 13, 14 and 23).

Article 10 of the CRPD obliges State Parties to 'take all necessary measures' to ensure the inherent right to life of persons with disabilities on an equal basis with others.

Article 11 obliges all State Parties to take 'all necessary measures to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk, including humanitarian emergencies and the occurrence of natural disasters'.

Article 32 obliges all State Parties to ensure that international cooperation and development programming, including international cooperation on climate action, is inclusive of and accessible to disabled people. As outlined in the Article, appropriate technical and economic assistance must be provided to enable this.

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

The preamble to the Paris Agreement, the international treaty on climate change, adopted by 196 parties at COP21 in Paris in 2015, obliges State Parties to 'respect, promote and consider their respective obligations on human rights, the right to health, the rights of indigenous peoples, local communities, migrants, children, persons with disabilities and people in vulnerable situations'.

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) or Global Goals are a collection of 17 interlinked global goals designed to be a 'blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all'. The SDGs were set up in 2015 by the United Nations General Assembly and are intended to be achieved by the year 2030.

The SDGs are interdependent, interconnected and designed to be reached in unison. As such, **Goal 13: Climate Action** cannot be reached without ensuring the rights of disabled people.

The Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030)

The Sendai Framework requires countries that have agreed to the framework to ensure that gender, age, disability, women and youth leadership are integrated in all disaster risk reduction (DRR) policies and practices, that information on disaster risk reduction and emergency planning is accessible to disabled people, and that data is disaggregated, including by sex, age and disability.

15 IPCC (2018) Summary for Policymakers of IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C approved by governments <https://www.ipcc.ch/2018/10/08/summary-for-policymakers-of-ipcc-special-report-on-global-warming-of-1-5c-approved-by-governments/>

4. Climate action in Scotland

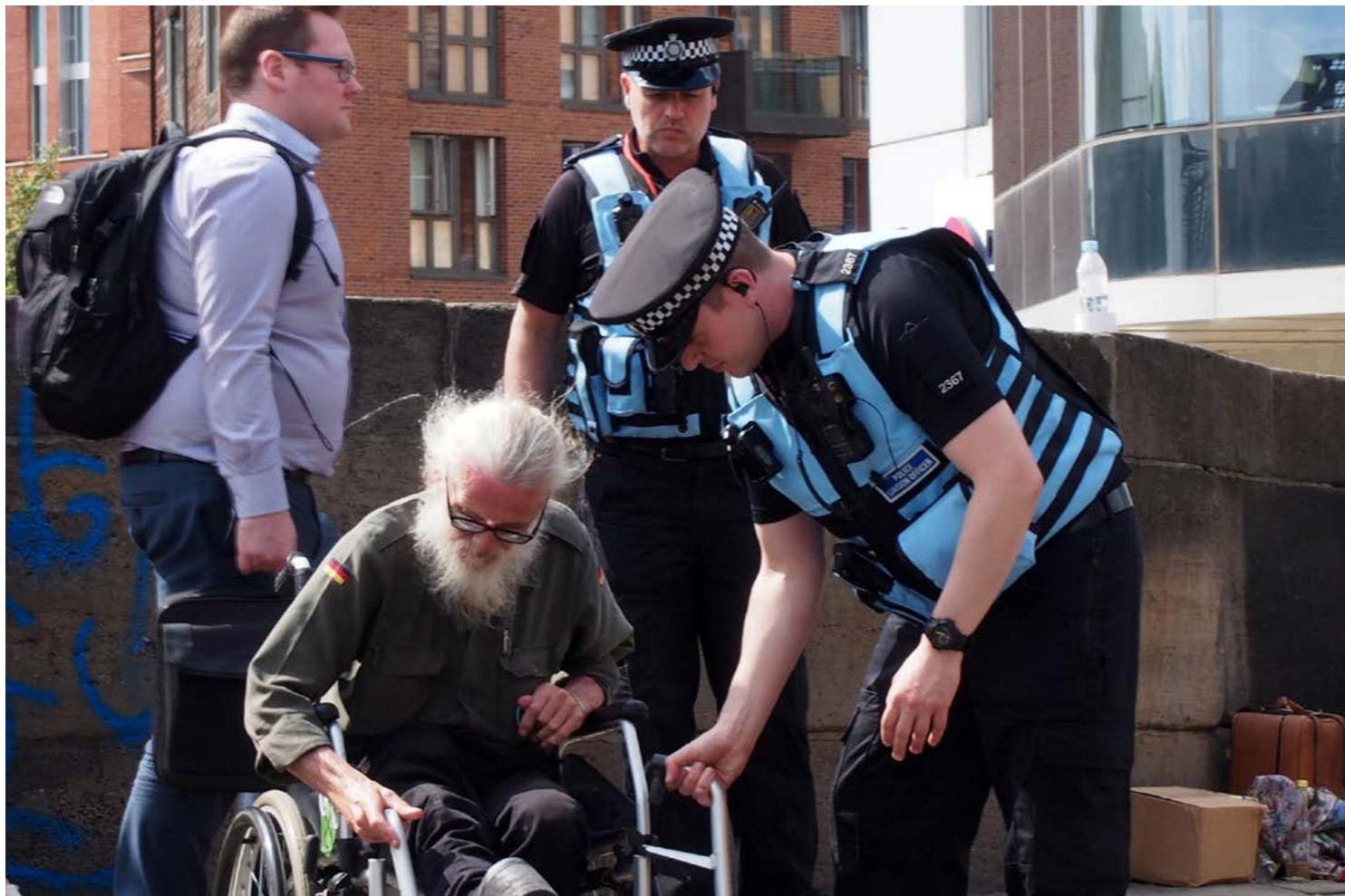
We are already starting to feel the impacts of a changing climate in Scotland and the Scottish Government has responded by declaring a climate emergency and legislating to achieve a target for net-zero emissions of all greenhouse gases by 2045.

The Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019, which received Royal Assent on the 31 October 2019, sets targets for the reduction of emissions and makes provision about advice, plans and reports in relation to those targets.

This legislation and the policies that flow from it are designed to contribute appropriately to the world's efforts to deliver on the Paris Agreement, namely, to limit global warming to well below 2°C, and pursuing efforts to limit it to 1.5°C.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change recently stated that meeting the commitments set forth in the Paris Agreement will require rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society.

The latest results from the Scottish Household Survey show that 68% of adults in Scotland now agree that climate change is an immediate and urgent problem, up from 46% in 2013. In 2019, for the first time, the majority of every age group viewed climate change as an immediate and urgent problem.¹⁵



5. Climate action and disabled people

Despite the obligations in international law, disabled people have been perhaps the most overlooked group in climate change negotiations, policymaking and programme implementation to date. Moreover, the growing body of legal scholarship on the intersections of human rights and climate change has failed to address the relationship between the rights of disabled people and efforts to combat climate change.

Indeed, very few of the articles, monographs, edited books or special issues that have been published on human rights and climate change tackle how the rights of disabled people might be affected by climate impacts, policies or initiatives.¹⁶

Disabled people have not been the focus of specific initiatives to respect and fulfil their rights, such as those that have been created for other groups, such as the Indigenous Peoples Platform or the Gender Action Plan.¹⁷ Moreover, even though disabled people form part of dedicated stakeholder groups in the context of the UN Sustainable Development Goals or the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, there is no constituency for disabled people under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

This failure to include disabled people in the world's efforts to combat the climate crisis has had dramatic consequences. Due to inaccessible relief and response efforts, the effects of climate change – from disasters such as typhoons and wildfires, to more gradual changes such as droughts, increases in temperature and sea level rise – have a disproportionate impact upon the lives, wellbeing, and livelihoods of disabled people all over the world.¹⁸

Climate impacts are especially severe for disabled people who experience intersecting forms of discrimination, including women, children, Indigenous peoples, the poor and other minority groups.¹⁹

This picture may be starting to change. It is encouraging to see a burgeoning recognition – at the international level at least – of the importance of taking a rights-based, disability-inclusive approach to climate action. The UN and other international commentators are beginning to acknowledge that the processes of developing and implementing climate actions should be inclusive and participatory.

The parties to the UN Climate Agreements have finally recognised that disabled people are key stakeholders in the international response to climate change. As such, they must be engaged throughout the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) processes, and their rights respected and promoted through any climate activity, including mitigation, adaptation or capacity building.

A recent report into the rights of disabled people in the context of the UNFCCC acknowledged that mitigation actions, adaptation measures and innovative approaches to financing loss and reducing damage 'must all have human rights at their heart in order to be effective and equitable'.²⁰



In July of 2019, the United Nations Human Rights Council adopted a resolution calling on governments to adopt a disability-inclusive approach when taking action to address climate change.²¹ The resolution urged:

'States to strengthen and implement policies aimed at increasing the participation of persons with disabilities in climate change responses at the local, national, regional and international levels...'²²

However, disabled people have remained largely 'invisible' to climate adaptation efforts²³ and their needs and perspectives have tended to be excluded from initiatives to reduce emissions, tackle waste and address pollution in Scotland, including, for instance, in the initial debates around reducing single-use plastics, specifically plastic straws, essential to enable some disabled people to be able to drink safely and conveniently.

15 Scottish Household Survey 2019 Annual Report <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-household-survey-2019-annual-report/>

16 Jodoin, Sébastien, Nilani Ananthamoorthy & Katherine Lofts (2020) 'A Disability Rights Approach to Climate Governance' 47(1) Ecology Law Quarterly

17 Council of Canadians with Disabilities, Inclusiva, and CIEL (2019) 'The Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the Context of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change'

18 Gaskin, Cadeyrn J., Davina Taylor, Susan Kinnear, Julie Mann, Wendy Hillman, and Monica Moran (2017) 'Factors Associated with the Climate Change Vulnerability and the Adaptive Capacity of People with Disability: A Systematic Review' Weather, Climate, and Society 9: 801–14.

19 Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (2020). 'Analytical Study on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the Context of Climate Change' <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/44/30>

20 Council of Canadians with Disabilities (CCD); Inclusiva; CIEL (2019) 'The Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the Context of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change: The relevant International Frameworks and Compilation of Decisions adopted by the Parties to the UNFCCC'

<https://www.ciel.org/reports/the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-in-the-context-of-the-un-framework-convention-on-climate-change-dec-2019/>

21 Human Rights Watch (July, 2019) 'UN Climate Resolution Emphasizes Protection of Disability Rights'

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/07/15/un-climate-resolution-emphasizes-protection-disability-rights>

22 UN Human Rights Council 41st Regular Session - GICJ Report https://www.gicj.org/conferences-meetings/human-rights-council-sessions/session-reports/1618-un-hrc-41-reg-session-gicj-report#App_Environment

23 Wolbring, Gregor (2009) 'A Culture of Neglect: Climate Discourse and Disabled People' 12 M/C J. 23–25; Gregor Wolbring & Verlyn Leopatra (2012) 'Climate Change, Water, Sanitation and Energy Insecurity: Invisibility Of People With Disabilities' 1 Canadian Journal of Disability Studies 66.

6. What is Eco-ableism?

Despite a growing recognition that disabled people will be hit hard by climate change, as disabled people we have often been left out of the policymaking process for climate action.

This may be a result of ‘eco-ableism’ – a failure by non-disabled environmental activists to recognise two key issues: that disabled people stand to be impacted significantly by climate change; and that many of the climate actions being promoted to address climate change may make life more difficult for disabled people.

Examples of Eco-Ableism include:

- Ignoring disabled people in emergency planning, e.g. when designing flood protections or flood evacuations
- Urban planning for low-carbon cities that discriminates against disabled people who need to drive a car or rely on support from others who drive cars and find public transport inaccessible to them
- Protesting about climate change (blocking roads or public transport) in ways that negatively impact on and alienate disabled people
- Banning plastic straws without accepting that some disabled people need them to drink safely and conveniently
- Removing disabled parking bays to make way for cycle lanes
- Promoting active travel without realising that some disabled people cannot walk, wheel or cycle
- Recycling initiatives that don’t include providing the right support to disabled people who struggle to recycle or who need information about recycling in accessible formats

A focus on the concept of eco-ableism does not intend to suggest that disabled people do not want to be part of climate action – many disabled people are committed climate activists or have real concerns about climate change, as they may have much to lose from climate impacts – but instead is an acknowledgement of the need for disabled people to have their priorities and lived experiences listened to and accepted by environmentalists and policy- and decision-makers.

This focus can be fairly liberating for everyone involved in driving forward climate action as it allows us to move away from a focus on individual responsibility and individual behaviour change towards real market solutions and an insistence on corporate responsibility for reducing emissions, waste, pollution and addressing biodiversity loss.

Why shouldn’t those who have contributed most to the causes of climate change be most responsible for addressing it rather than those who have been least responsible but who may be hit hard by it?

7. Net-zero and disabled Scots

Efforts to reduce emissions via zero-carbon policymaking in Scotland (active travel that emphasises walking/cycling, car-free zones, low-emission zones, integrated transport, promotion of electric vehicles for example) have the potential to actively discriminate against disabled people who rely on cars, or who need support from others who drive cars, who cannot afford new electric vehicles (or find accessible or adapted electric vehicles), or who find the infrastructure to charge vehicles inaccessible.

Case study: Low Emission Zones

In 2015, the Scottish Government made a commitment to significantly improve Scotland’s air quality through the ‘Cleaner Air for Scotland’ strategy, where Low Emission Zones (LEZ) were identified as a potential tool within the strategy. LEZs are to be introduced across Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee and Aberdeen between February 2022 and May 2022. Plans to implement LEZs were temporarily paused due to the Covid-19 outbreak, but work has now restarted.

The air quality standard the LEZs are based on are the Euro emissions standards. To enter/exit/operate within a LEZ in Scotland, a diesel vehicle will need to be Euro 6 (generally those registered from September 2016) and a petrol vehicle Euro 4 (generally those registered from January 2006).

Vehicles that do not meet the emission standard set for a LEZ will not be able to enter the zone. A penalty charge will be payable by the vehicle’s registered keeper when a non-compliant vehicle enters the LEZ. The initial penalty charge for all non-compliant vehicles is set at £60, reduced by 50% if it is paid within 14 days. A surcharge is also proposed whereby the penalty amount doubles with each subsequent

breach of the rules detected in the same LEZ. The penalty charges are capped at £480 for cars and light goods vehicles (LGVs) and £960 for buses and heavy goods vehicles (HGVs). Where there are no further breaches of the rules detected within the 90 days following a previous violation, the surcharge rate is reset to the base tier of charge, i.e. £60.

Several grants and loans will be made available to support individuals and businesses affected by the LEZ to take older, more polluting vehicles off the road. To be eligible, households must be on specific means-tested benefits, own a non-compliant car (which has been owned by them for at least 12 months with no outstanding finance), and live within a 20km radius of a planned LEZ.

While proposals for LEZs include an exemption for ‘vehicles for disabled persons’ which includes vehicles for which a disabled person holds a blue badge or ‘disabled passenger vehicles’ tax class, there is a concern that disabled people living in poverty, not eligible for a blue badge and not in receipt of a qualifying benefit and unable to switch to public transport for reasons related to their impairment will be actively disadvantaged by LEZs.

Initiatives that might actively disadvantage disabled people if their needs are not recognised may become part of the picture in a net-zero economy. Town centre planning for active travel that emphasises walking/cycling may take little account of those who can do neither and lead to the removal of parking bays for disabled people, while fines for a failure to recycle would financially penalise disabled Scots who cannot recycle for reasons related to impairment, and urban planning for low-carbon cities that favours pedestrianisation may result in urban ‘no go’ zones for disabled people reliant on cars, and taxis, when public transport is not accessible or suitable for them.



Case Study: Spaces for People Active Travel Schemes

Spaces for People Active Travel Schemes have been introduced in a number of Scottish city and town centres in the wake of the Covid-19 outbreak. These schemes were aimed at creating more space for people passing each other on pavements, combatting emissions by reducing the number of vehicles on roads by creating more cycle lanes and pedestrianised areas, and making cycling, wheeling and walking safer and more attractive to residents and visitors.

However, disabled people and their organisations, including local access panels have raised serious concerns about the schemes and have reported that they are causing particular problems for disabled people with mobility impairments as they have led to blue badge parking spaces being removed, buses that are no longer able to stop at kerbsides and use ramps to help disabled people enter and exit, poorly designed ‘pop-up’ cycle lanes that incorporate ‘floating’ bus-stops, which are difficult for disabled people to use, and fewer dropping-off points for disabled people who need to use taxis.

Disabled people have reported to Inclusion Scotland that Spaces for People schemes were put in place far too hastily and without adequate consultation or Equality Impact Assessments, and are in effect creating ‘no-go’ areas for disabled people in city centres in Scotland, including Edinburgh and Stirling.

The Edinburgh Access Panel, RNIB and Guide Dogs have recently asked Edinburgh City Council to put the Spaces for People scheme on hold to allow it to be independently audited.

We also need to ensure that moves to facilitate low-waste/low-emission living in Scotland are accessible to disabled people where possible – recycling initiatives, return deposit schemes, low-emission vehicles/charging points for example – and that disabled people are not financially penalised, or socially stigmatised, if they simply cannot live a ‘greener’ life or participate in these schemes for reasons related to their impairment/s.

Poverty and disabled people in Scotland

Disabled Scots are at greater risk of living in poverty than non-disabled citizens, a risk factor that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) strongly associates with greater climate vulnerability. Covid-19 has supercharged existing inequalities, deepening poverty and drawing many thousands more families into poverty and destitution, putting the human rights of disabled people at further risk.

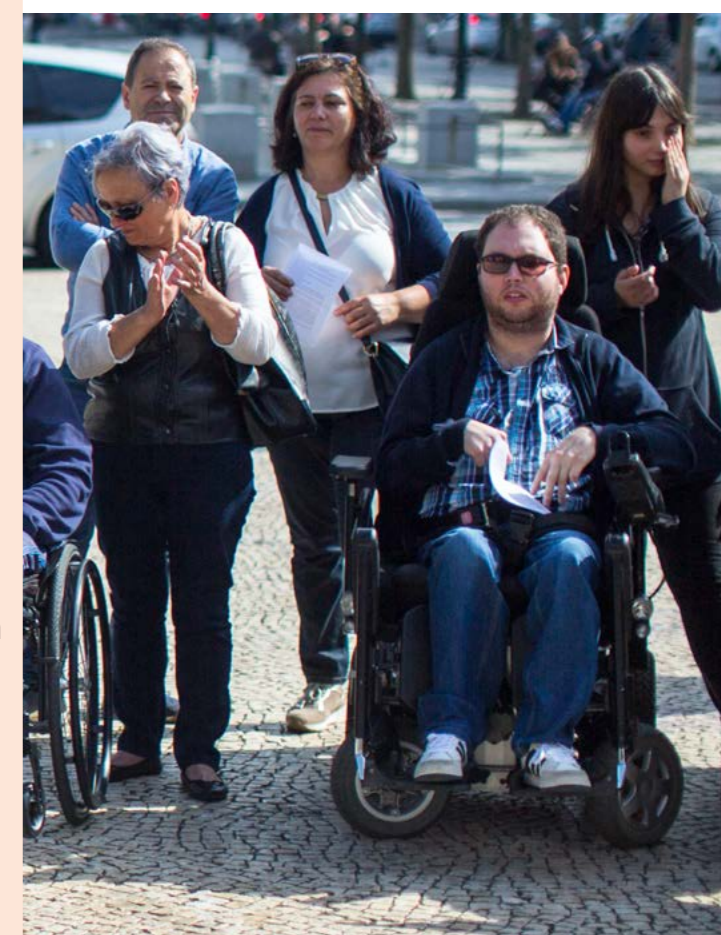
The official measure of poverty (households living on less than 60% of median income) fails to take into account the additional costs associated with disability.

In 2018 Scope found that Scots disabled people spent on average £632 a month on disability-related expenses (e.g., taxis, increased use of heating, special equipment, care costs, etc.). These are the highest excess costs in the UK. Once these costs are taken into account fully, half a million (500,000) Scottish disabled people and their families are living in poverty, 48% of the total of all people in Scotland living in poverty, despite making up only 22% of the population.

Even using the official measure of poverty, according to Scottish Government figures one in four (24%) Scots children were living in poverty in 2018/19 but in households containing a disabled adult or child, the rate of poverty among children rose to 29%. This meant that nearly half (45% or 100,000) of all the children living in poverty in Scotland were to be found in households containing a disabled person.

With the exception of treatments of ‘vulnerability’ in relation to the impacts of climate change for disabled people in the Global South, disabled people are largely overlooked in the research on climate change in the UK as a whole and in Scotland in particular. There is very little research evidence on the impact of zero-carbon policymaking on disabled people, in Scotland, or anywhere else for that matter.

We know that there are significant impairment-related barriers to recycling, re-using, travel via public transport, use of carbon-neutral infrastructure, active travel, making homes energy efficient, protesting about climate change, and getting involved in local decision-making and other relevant issues, but there is almost no evidence in the research literature around climate change in Scotland that relates to disabled Scots. This must change.



8. Current Context

Climate activists around the world are keen to persuade national governments to seize a ‘once in a lifetime’ opportunity to turn the Covid-19 crisis into a defining moment in the fight against climate change, by delivering an economic recovery that accelerates the transition to a cleaner, net-zero emissions economy, one that strengthens resilience both to the virus and the impacts of a changing climate.²⁴

The movement for a ‘just and green recovery’ from Covid-19 in Scotland is starting to galvanise civil society,²⁵ and emphasises that lessons from the pandemic on the importance of planning for systemic risks also apply to our preparations for climate change itself.

This movement urges the Scottish Government to invest in climate-resilient, low-carbon infrastructure, job creation in low-carbon and climate-resilient industries, training and reskilling of the workforce and a sustained effort to confront and plan for the range of climate risks that face the UK as a whole and Scotland in particular,²⁶ including flooding, over-heating and water shortages.

Commentators and activists argue that we have a rare chance to markedly accelerate the repurposing of government in Scotland away from the prioritisation of economic growth, and towards the goals of wellbeing and sustainability, ending inequality and environmental destruction.

Disabled people may have much to gain from this agenda, but only if they are included in shaping it.

It is clear that Covid-19 and the anti-virus measures brought in to respond to it have changed all our lives dramatically and may have inadvertently led to a (temporary) worldwide reduction in emissions^{27 28} that could be beneficial to climate action.

However, what is also equally apparent is that disabled Scots have been harder hit by the pandemic, not only because they may be at greater risk of severe illness – but equally or more so – because Covid-19 has supercharged the existing inequality they already face and made new inequality likely.

Risks to health and wellbeing for disabled people from Covid-19 not only relate to health status but also to factors such as geography, having a caring role (including childcare), the nature of paid work, the need for support with daily living, the home setting and behaviours of the general public.

Inclusion Scotland carried out an online survey throughout April 2020 to find out what impact the Covid-19 pandemic was having on disabled people across Scotland. Over 800 disabled people and their carers responded, and it was clear from an analysis of the responses that risk from Covid-19 for disabled people was about much more than simply risk to health.²⁹

24 Committee on Climate Change (2020) ‘COVID-19 Can Be an Historic Turning Point in Tackling the Global Climate Crisis’ <https://www.theccc.org.uk/2020/06/25/covid-19-can-be-an-historic-turning-point-in-tackling-the-global-climate-crisis/>

25 <https://foe.scot/campaign/just-green-recovery-for-scotland/>

26 Scottish Government (2020) ‘Towards a Robust, Resilient Wellbeing Economy for Scotland: Report of the Advisory Group on Economic Recovery’.

27 Committee on Climate Change (2020) ‘COVID-19 Can Be an Historic Turning Point in Tackling the Global Climate Crisis’ <https://www.theccc.org.uk/2020/06/25/covid-19-can-be-an-historic-turning-point-in-tackling-the-global-climate-crisis/>

28 Le Quere et al (2020) ‘Temporary Reduction in Daily Global CO2 Emissions During the COVID-19 Forced Confinement’ <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41558-020-0797-x>

29 Inclusion Scotland (2020) ‘Initial Findings of Inclusion Scotland’s Covid-19 Survey’

Disabled people were under significant pressure during lockdown because:

- Social care support had been stopped or reduced: Around 30% of respondents told us their support had either stopped completely or had been reduced. Disabled people were left in desperate situations as a result. Survey respondents told us they were forced to sleep in their wheelchair or left unable to get out of bed. Others told us they were unable to wash and dress themselves and keep up with basic household chores.
- People had new or increased caring responsibilities: Around 40% were experiencing challenges with caring for children/family members since the start of the pandemic.
- Disabled people were struggling to get access to the food and medicine they need: Around two-thirds (64%) said that the crisis had had an impact on them getting the food or medicine that they needed for themselves or the person they care for.
- Disabled people were being asked to sign Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) notices: Though we didn’t ask a specific question about DNR, four respondents told us that they or someone they know had been asked to sign DNR notices or informed that they would not be ventilated should they contract Covid-19.
- Disabled people were concerned that they would lose their job: Around one in ten respondents (11%) were concerned that they could lose their job as a result of the pandemic.
- Social distancing and isolation were proving extremely challenging: Disabled people with and without pre-existing mental health conditions were finding everyday life under lockdown extremely stressful. Significant numbers of disabled people (15) with existing mental health problems told us they were feeling suicidal in lockdown.

The lessons from disabled people’s experience of Covid-19 are included here because they are extremely pertinent to discussions about climate justice.

Covid-19 has shown us that while we may have all been in the same storm, we are not all in the same boat. Which is equally and directly applicable when we consider responses to climate change and disabled people in Scotland.

The crisis has upended many of the systems and networks disabled people relied on to meet their most basic needs, including getting access to food and medicine and meeting their own care needs – and laid bare the cracks in our systems of support for disabled Scots.

It has also shown quite clearly the fundamental importance of including, involving, engaging and considering disabled people in emergency and disaster planning.

The above raises the question of how can disabled people be expected to respond to the climate crisis, live a ‘greener, more sustainable’ life and engage with the debates around climate action when they don’t have the support they need to get out of bed?

Responses to our survey and press coverage of these issues showed that many of the difficulties disabled people experienced during lockdown were because of inaccessible systems and processes that have been put in place without consulting disabled people.

This is equally true of efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change and is why meaningful involvement of people with lived experience of exclusion is so vital to respond to both Covid-19 and a changing climate.

9. Involvement of disabled people is key

In November of this year, the UK will host the rescheduled 26th Conference of the Parties climate summit (COP26) and 2021 will also see the UK hold the presidency of the G7.

The year ahead is a critical moment for global progress on climate change and a major test of global cooperation more generally after Covid-19. The core goal of COP26 is to raise the ambition of countries' targets. As COP President, there will be huge expectations on the UK to do so.

The Scottish Government has already set more ambitious targets than the UK Government to reduce Scotland's emissions of all greenhouse gases. The Climate Change Act 2019 sets targets to reduce Scotland's emissions of all greenhouse gases to net-zero by 2045 at the latest, with interim targets for reductions of at least 56% by 2020, 75% by 2030, 90% by 2040.

This ambitious target, five years ahead of the UK, is based on the independent Climate Change Committee (CCC)'s advice to the Scottish Government on the limit of what can currently be achieved. The levels of all of Scotland's targets are regularly reviewed following advice from the CCC.

The 2019 Act embeds the principles of a 'just transition', which means reducing emissions in a way that tackles inequality and promotes fair work, which the Scottish Government says will be at the heart of Scotland's approach to reaching net-zero.

A just transition is a commitment by the Scottish Government to design policies in relation to climate change in a way that ensures the benefits of climate change action

are shared widely, while the costs do not unfairly burden those least able to pay, or whose livelihoods are directly or indirectly at risk as the economy shifts and changes. At present, there has been no attempt to define a 'just transition' for disabled Scots.

A Just Transition Commission has been established by Scottish ministers, which aims to build on Scotland's existing strengths and assets and to 'understand and mitigate risks that could arise in relation to regional cohesion, equalities, poverty (including fuel poverty), and a sustainable and inclusive labour market in Scotland'.³⁰

The commission has provided an interim report to the Scottish Government to inform climate action, which makes no specific mention of disabled people.³¹ The report does, however, emphasise the need for 'on-going and proactive dialogue with all corners of society that will be affected by the transition to net-zero'.

The commission also recommended the establishment of a Climate Assembly in Scotland, which has since been created, to bring together people from all walks of life, from across Scotland, to learn about and discuss how we can tackle climate change. The organisers of the assembly included, as a criterion for stratification, disability and experience of long-term health conditions, and ensured that the Climate Assembly was representative of disabled people.

³⁰ Scottish Government (2020) Just Transition Commission <https://www.gov.scot/groups/just-transition-commission/>

³¹ Scottish Government (2020) Just Transition Commission Interim Report <https://www.gov.scot/publications/transition-commission-interim-report/>



Case Study: Plastic Straws

We saw with the proposed market restriction – effectively a ban – on plastic straws in Scotland, and disabled people's initial reaction to it, how important it is to involve disabled people and their disabled people's organisations (DPOs), in decision-making from the outset to avoid excluding disabled people or alienating us from the discourse on actions around climate change.

Single-use plastic straws are essential for some disabled people, enabling them to drink safely and conveniently, with proposed alternatives being unsuitable in terms of flexibility and safety. The suggestion that they would be made available on request or on prescription for disabled people in Scotland, without proper guidance being introduced to businesses on securing access to plastic straws, could be stigmatising and burdensome for disabled people.

Inclusion Scotland has been working closely with Zero Waste Scotland, who is advising the Scottish Government on the Single Use Plastics Directive to ensure that an exemption to the ban on plastic straws for disabled people works in practice for those who need to use straws, and that lived experience of straw users is front-and-centre in designing a communications strategy on the exemption and toolkit for businesses and service providers.

Inclusion Scotland set up the Plastic Straws Advisory Group, which includes disabled people who need to use a plastic straw and representatives from DPOs who have commented on draft regulations and guidance on the exemption, accessible communications and training for those dealing with requests for straws.

10. Right to protest

It is also time for a consideration of disabled people's right to protest in relation to the climate emergency in Scotland and elsewhere – how can organisations that support climate action and protest in Scotland make sure that disabled people are not shut out – what does inclusive direct action actually entail?

Lessons from the Extinction Rebellion (XR) 'autumn uprising' protests in London are very pertinent here as they highlighted that actual methods of protest (blocking roads and disrupting public transport) had disability-related impacts and alienated some otherwise supportive disabled people from the discourse.³² Yet, in addition, when active efforts were made by XR protestors to include and support disabled climate activists and make the protests more accessible and inclusive, these efforts were reported as being frustrated by the police.

The Metropolitan Police's advisers on disability accused the Met of 'degrading and humiliating' treatment of disabled activists – many of whom felt deliberately targeted for arrest during the protests – and of confiscating wheelchairs, ramps, noise-cancelling headphones, adapted toilets and other items intended to make protest sites accessible to disabled people, according to sources within XR.³³

We also need stakeholders active on climate issues to consider and ensure that participation in the national climate debate in Scotland, and other methods of national

and local engagement on climate action are inclusive and accessible for disabled Scots.

We have found that policymakers active on climate change issues in Scotland are becoming more alive to the need to involve disabled people so as not to cause additional disadvantage and they appear keen to do so. We hope this report will act as a catalyst for this work going forward.

Climate justice, however, should not just be about avoiding additional disadvantage. Disabled people, as experts in their own lives, have extremely valuable skills in relation to problem solving, adapting and overcoming barriers – all of which could be very usefully harnessed in efforts to adapt to climate change. As disability activist Alice Wong explains:

'Disabled people are creatures of adaptation that design and build worlds that work for them. The skills that we have reimagining/hacking/surviving will serve us well in adapting to climate change.'³⁴

³² 'Extinction Rebellion's Protests Are Making Life Harder For Disabled People Like Me' https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/extinction-rebellion_uk_5cb-81d06e4b081fd16932fcd?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLnNvbS8&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAAjHfOjOUyxLJISqcCTDa-zWoUB7VB6jH3BTi0vi_CDZ2UNCgeYN4WnaRa5iGzBs7IliUuhwFz8hWtU06fSnBvaoloneg2-JfX8xg5FZZRjXdhQyq-ZYhEGQodwogU794CixFVR5zHdY52zx-NR7zXFyowKLD-qqmngEfaJ2gRCO3mG

³³ 'Met police accused of "degrading" treatment of disabled XR activists' <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/oct/29/met-treatment-of-disabled-xr-activists-branded-degrading-and-humiliating>

³⁴ Wong, A. (2019) 'The Rise and Fall of the Plastic Straw: Sucking in Crip Defiance.' Catalyst: Feminism, Theory, Technoscience, 5(1), 1-12. <http://www.catalyst-journal.org> | ISSN: 2380-3312

11. Our Asks

To the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

1. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) needs to recognise disabled people's organisations, and allied organisations who are promoting disability inclusion in climate action, as a constituency.

In the UNFCCC process, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have formed themselves into loose groups with diverse but broadly clustered interests or perspectives, called constituencies. At present, the nine constituencies are: business and industry NGOs (BINGO), environmental NGOs (ENGO), farmers, Indigenous peoples' organisations (IPO), local government and municipal authorities (LGMA), research and independent NGOs (RINGO), trade union NGOs (TUNGO), women and gender (WGC), and youth NGOs (YOUNGO).

Given the impacts of climate change on disabled people and the potential for climate action to discriminate against disabled people, we are calling for a tenth constituency for disabled people to be recognised by the UNFCCC.

To the UK Government

2. The UK Government should use COP26 as a platform to encourage national governments to view disabled people as key stakeholders in the development of international and domestic climate policy and to ensure meaningful participation of disabled people in climate action, including design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all climate-related policies, initiatives and finance.

We believe COP26 will be a critical moment in the global fight against climate change. We would urge the UK Government to use the COP presidency to promote disability inclusion within climate negotiations, and international and domestic policymaking.



To the Scottish Government

3. Involve disabled people and their organisations in policymaking to achieve a truly just transition to net-zero by 2045.

4. As work is underway to finalise public engagement on climate change in Scotland, we would urge the Scottish Government to ensure that disabled people and disabled people's own organisations (DPOs), are fully recognised and involved in the engagement process.

In the context of 'normalising' climate action, we need to be sure whose 'normal' we are using as a barometer. As we seek to rapidly shift towards a low-carbon economy and a just and green recovery from Covid-19, we need to acknowledge where disabled people may experience discrimination or additional disadvantage and actively involve them in identifying the challenges and opportunities for creating sustainable, inclusive and accessible responses to climate change, being mindful about the scope for competing interests and goals, and the need for disabled Scots to be involved in co-producing ways forward that work for us all.



To Scottish Local Authorities

5. Ensure that efforts to reduce emissions, tackle pollution and create a circular economy across our towns and cities in Scotland include and involve disabled people and include full equality impact assessments.

Disabled people have remained largely 'invisible' to climate adaptation efforts in Scotland. Many disabled Scots are concerned about climate change and want to be involved in climate action yet describe being alienated by a discourse around net-zero that fails to recognise that many of the changes to habits and lifestyle being promoted, which could contribute to minimising climate change and rehabilitating the environment, discriminate against disabled people or are difficult or impossible for disabled people to do. In this context, it is vital that policymaking in this area makes proper use of equality impact assessments.

To Civil Society Organisations working on climate issues in Scotland

6. Consider accessibility, disability inclusion and provision of accessible information when designing interventions, events, resources or protests about climate action.

We would urge climate activists and their organisations in Scotland to engage with disabled people and their organisations to make climate activist spaces and protests as accessible and inclusive as possible. We call on civil society organisations active on climate issues to consider the concept of eco-ableism and how to tackle it within the environmental and climate change movements and to centre the voices of disabled people.

There can be no climate justice in Scotland without the active involvement of disabled people. After all, it's our planet too.

12. About Inclusion Scotland

Inclusion Scotland is a national network of disabled people's organisations (DPOs) and individual disabled people run by disabled people ourselves. This is important because disabled people know best about the barriers that prevent our full inclusion into society. We experience them every day.

Our main aim is to draw attention to the physical, social, economic, cultural and attitudinal barriers that affect disabled people's everyday lives and to encourage a wider understanding of these barriers throughout Scotland. Inclusion Scotland is part of the disabled people's Independent Living Movement.

Our mission is to achieve positive changes to policy and practice, so that we disabled people are fully included throughout all Scottish society as equal citizens.

We do this by:

- **Influencing decision-makers**, ensuring that disabled people are involved in developing effective solutions for policy and practice that reflect our expertise by experience and meet our needs and aspirations.
- **Supporting disabled people to be decision-makers themselves**, promoting the equal representation of disabled people as policymakers and our right to make decisions about our own lives.
- **Developing capacity, awareness and engagement**, of disabled people, DPOs, and the organisations and institutions that affect our lives.

Inclusion Scotland has a network of DPO members, and many partners, with a reach of over 10,000 individual disabled people via our newsletter, e-bulletin, social media channels and membership.

Inclusion Scotland also convenes the SILC (Scottish Independent Living Coalition) and we run projects which involve disabled people of all ages, including young people, such as our 'We Can Work' internship programme and our Civic Participation programme, which supports disabled people to contribute to society through politics and public participation.

See our website at www.inclusionscotland.org

You can become a member of Inclusion Scotland by visiting our membership page. Membership is free and open to disabled people, disabled people's organisations and our supporters.

<https://inclusionscotland.org/become-a-member/>

If you have any questions on this report,
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