

The Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee

Green recovery

Submission From **YouthLink Scotland**

In most cases we will publish your written submission on the Scottish Parliament's website. What you send us may also be quoted in the Committee's report or in its Committee meetings. These are public meetings that are broadcast online.

Before making a submission, please read our [privacy notice](#) (section headed Parliamentary business – Committees) about submitting your views to a Committee. This tells you about how we process your personal data. If you are under 12 years of age, please read this 'Submitting Your Views to Committee: Young People' section.

Introduction/General

YouthLink Scotland is the national agency for youth work. We are a membership organisation, representing over 100 regional and national youth organisations from both the voluntary and statutory sectors. We champion the role and value of youth work and represent the interests and aspirations of the voluntary and statutory sector. Our vision is of a nation which values its young people and their contribution to society, where young people are supported to achieve their potential.

Scotland's youth work sector reaches in excess of 380,000 young people in youth work opportunities each week. Youth work has three essential and definitive features:

- Young people choose to participate
- Youth work must build from where young people are
- Youth work recognises the young person and the youth worker as partners in a learning process.

While the activities, venues, and approaches utilised to deliver youth work are varied, including youth clubs, youth projects, specialist or targeted provision, social activism, outdoor learning, awards programmes, uniformed organisations, and democratic participation – youth work in all its forms provides fundamental support to young people across the length and breadth of Scotland.

YouthLink Scotland lead on the co-production of the National Youth Work Strategy 2020-25 where we have engaged 1000s of young people and youth workers who have highlighted climate action as a priority area. We are the policy and advocacy lead for Scotland with Our Bright Future. We manage and run climate change focused programmes and training with young people and youth workers and have held a climate change policy seminar series during 2020. As such, we are well positioned to respond to The Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee call for views on green recovery. However, we support the submissions made by individual members of the organisation.

The Committee would particularly welcome views on the following questions–

1. Do the principles of sustainable development (as set out in the annexe), and those for a resilient recovery, as proposed by the UK Committee on Climate Change, provide a comprehensive framework for guiding an effective green recovery in Scotland?

Sustainable Education Development

A comprehensive framework for guiding an effective green recovery in Scotland should include education as a key component. Green recovery including environmental sustainability is intrinsically linked with social justice, human rights, global citizenship and democratic participation. Sustainable development education must be integrated into all forms of learning across people's lives, including through informal learning such as youth work. Using the Learning for Sustainability model is shown to increase attainment and have positive mental and physical health benefits.¹

A shift towards long-term positive behaviours, as outlined in principle 2 cannot be achieved without wide-spread, organised and comprehensive sustainable development education. Young people should be informed about the impact of their individual behaviours, as well as being prepared for future employability in low carbon industries.

Sustainable Development Goals and United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

There is an opportunity to link this plan with overarching frameworks like the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Scotland was one of the first nations to accept the SDGs and pledge to work towards them. The SDGs are also aligned with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). All of the SDGs are relevant to children and young people. Fundamental children's rights cannot be realised without the success of the SDGs. Children and young people have the right to have a say in all matters affecting them and this includes tackling climate change.

Blue Recovery

A comprehensive framework should include reference to a 'blue recovery'. In partnership with Marine Conservation Society, YouthLink Scotland held a policy seminar focused on a blue/green recovery and feedback received was that this was the right approach to take.

71% of the Earth's surface is covered in water. Therefore, we must do what we can to ensure the ocean is resilient to sustain us. Young people demonstrated during the Year of Coasts and Waters through the youth-led research project On Our Wave Length², focused on environmental impacts on coastal communities, a commitment to better understanding the need for a blue recovery for Scotland coasts, marine/wildlife and communities.

2. What are the key barriers to delivering a green recovery (within your sector and / or community)?

Valuing Youth Work

While there are enormous challenges brought by Coronavirus there is a strategic opportunity to build a greener, fairer and more inclusive society in Scotland. We know from our Universal Youth Work

¹ Education Scotland, *Outdoor Learning: Practical guidance, ideas and support for teachers and practitioners in Scotland*, p. 8-10

² <https://www.youthlinkscotland.org/news/blogs/august-2019/making-waves-with-young-climate-researchers/>

Research³ that youth work contributes to a growing body of evidence developing in Scotland, making a significant contribution to young people's lives through providing opportunities to lead and help others as well support to become more active citizens, broadening their horizons and realising their potential⁴. We need to see greater recognition of the benefits of youth work as a form of informal education in a post-covid19 landscape that views "blended" learning as the new normal. This should be available to all young people to help support a green recovery.

Valuing Youth Voice

A 2020 report by Ipsos Mori⁵ found that 84% of the Scottish public are concerned about climate change, with concern highest among young people (96% of those aged 16-24 say they are concerned). We also know from YouthLink Scotland's engagement with 1000s of young people and representatives from the youth work sector that one of their priorities for the development of the new National Youth Work Strategy 2020-2025 is climate change. Further, the Youth Strike4Climate movement showcased that young people are passionate and serious about the environment and that their voices are powerful and should be listened to.

Investment in Youth Work

As outlined youth work provides a crucial role in contributing to a green recovery. This will only continue to be the case if youth work is valued and properly resourced. In 2019, YouthLink Scotland launched the #InvestInYouthWork campaign^{6[3]} to show the value of youth work lies not only in the difference it makes directly to the lives of the young people who engage with services, but extends further to the many benefits it provides to wider society in working towards a green recovery. Investing in our young people provides considerable long-term benefits and directly addresses principles 2 and 4, namely 'lead a shift towards positive long-term behaviours' and 'embed fairness as a core principle'.

3. What key policies, actions and immediate priorities are needed to deliver a green recovery (within your sector and / or community)?

A recent survey of youth workers highlighted perceived reductions to youth work services, budgets and staffing across Scotland over the last three years and this is a serious concern. We must prioritise investment in youth work (the need for which is exacerbated in this crisis) and how it changes the lives of young people (the most crucial point of all), the value of youth workers, and the wider social and economic benefits and how that links to meaningful action to tackle the climate crisis.

Investment in Outdoor Learning

It is well understood that outdoor learning experiences can contribute positively to Scotland's children and young people, providing opportunities to raise young people's awareness of

³ <https://www.youthlinkscotland.org/media/3183/impact-of-community-based-universal-youth-work-in-scotland-november-2018.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.youthlinkscotland.org/media/4312/final-report-dg-community-based-universal-youth-work.pdf>

⁵ Ipsos Mori. (2020). Public and MSPs' attitudes to the climate emergency <https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/84-percent-scots-are-concerned-about-climate-change>

environmental and sustainability issues⁷ Young people's understanding and engagement with nature is essential to a green recovery.

Support to Get into Environmental Jobs

YouthLink Scotland are working in partnership with Our Bright Future as the policy and advocacy lead for Scotland⁸. Young people decided the project asks based on the changes they want to see, including:

1. More time spent learning in and about nature
2. Support to get into environmental jobs
3. Government, employers, businesses, schools and charities to pay more attention to the needs of young people and the environment

In relation to support into environmental jobs, young people have said they want the Government to fund a new Future Jobs scheme that would allow the environmental sector to support young people into environmental, conservation, horticulture and other careers. The reasons young people think Government should do this is because a joined up approach to investment is urgently needed to tackle both unemployment/poor employment and the need to recover the UK's natural environment.

#IWill4Nature – Youth Social Action

YouthLink Scotland is the #IWILL lead in Scotland. The campaign aims to increase the opportunities for young people to take part in youth social action activities such as volunteering, campaigning, fundraising and activism. We believe that young people have the energy, skills and ideas to change their communities, society and the environment for the better. Our #IWill4Nature⁹ sub-campaign champions the vital role that young people can play in supporting and improving the environment through their individual and collective actions.

Upskilling Youth Work Leaders on Climate Emergency

For a green recovery it is essential that youth work and young people who are leaders and mobilisers are equipped with a working understanding of the climate emergency and give them the skills and tools to help young people to turn their concerns about climate change into positive action¹⁰.

4. How should the 2021/22 Budget support a green and sustainable recovery and avoid locking in carbon; and what funding is needed in the ECCLR portfolio to deliver a green and sustainable recovery?

⁷ YouthLink Scotland. (2020). Outdoor Learning and Education Recovery.

<https://www.youthlinkscotland.org/media/4650/outdoor-learning-st4.pdf>

⁸ Our Bright Future is an ambitious and innovative partnership led by The Wildlife Trusts which brings together the youth and environmental sectors <https://www.youthlinkscotland.org/news/july-2020/our-bright-future/>

⁹ <https://www.youthlinkscotland.org/programmes/iwill-in-scotland/iwill4nature/>

¹⁰ As just one example, YouthLink Scotland and Keep Scotland Beautiful with funding from the Scottish Government are delivering climate emergency training as part of the Youth Leader Climate Project <https://www.youthlinkscotland.org/events/july-2020/climate-emergency-training-for-youth-workers/>

See section on Investment in Youth Work.

Funding is required for youth work organisations to support young people to engage in COP26 and have a voice in decision making and advocacy work moving forward towards a green recovery.