

Neil Gray,
Cabinet Secretary for Wellbeing Economy, Fair Work and Energy,
The Scottish Government

By email

9 May 2023

Dear Cabinet Secretary,

Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan

I am writing to provide input to the Scottish Government's Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan consultation. For background, Scotland Food & Drink is the leadership body for the food and drink industry in Scotland. We work in partnership with businesses, trade bodies and the public sector to responsibly grow the industry's value and reputation.

We are finalising a refreshed food and drink industry strategy for Scotland which has been developed by the Scotland Food & Drink Partnership, a pan-industry collaboration which includes the Scottish Government as a key partner. The strategy and accompanying delivery plans will place a significant focus on achieving environmental and social goals to complement our important work to support businesses, jobs, and communities through economic growth. We believe we can achieve prosperity across Scotland within environmental constraints.

We support Scotland's Just Transition Outcomes including "a strong, dynamic and productive economy, making Scotland a great place to do business". We also support the aims and principles of the National Strategy for Economic Transformation (NSET) including the ambitions for Scotland as a trading nation.

Food and drink has a unique place in Scotland's identity, economy, and cultural heritage, and its continued success is crucial for our future prosperity. As well as being the foundation of good health and wellbeing, it is interwoven in our landscape and culture and its production generates many billions of pounds in income each year that maintains livelihoods, employment, and income.

Producing our food and drink, and adding value along the supply chain, necessarily involves substantial amounts of energy. Heating and/or cooling, processing, drying, packaging, transporting, space heating and waste management all require energy. Whilst producers will continually seek to reduce their energy use, it is important to recognise that ongoing significant energy provision will be needed to create, transport, and store the wide variety of high-quality food and drink we enjoy domestically and supply globally. We therefore need to significantly increase the availability of renewable energy in Scotland, and we welcome the aim to "be a renewable powerhouse" within the draft Energy Strategy.

It is important that the Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan is interoperable with other existing and emerging plans and regulations such as Good Food Nation and the new Agriculture Bill, as well as how we build a prosperous trading nation

through NSET. It is essential to ensure sufficient provision of domestically available renewable energy and low carbon transportation for our food and drink businesses. We need to build resilient local supply chains whilst also exporting products made with renewable energy generated within Scotland to enhance opportunities for growth in line with our social and environmental goals.

Through our new industry strategy, with a clear priority to achieve “net zero”, we will help to realise a vision of a Scottish food and drink supply chain decoupled from fossil fuels. Powered by renewable on and off-grid energy, our producers will transform Scotland’s abundant natural ingredients into food and drink which sustains the nation and can be traded across the UK, the EU, and further afield.

We can be low carbon food and drink pioneers, harnessing the natural resources of wind, solar, hydrogen, hydro and tidal power to produce world-class food and drink, add value, create jobs, and deliver multiple benefits for our communities whilst protecting nature and the climate. This is why we support your plan for a “flourishing, climate friendly energy system that delivers affordable, resilient and clean energy supplies for Scotland’s households, communities and business.”

To achieve this, businesses along the food and drink supply chain are ready to do as much as possible to reduce energy consumption and to source more from renewable sources. It is vital that we work together to explore all the mechanisms available to enable this to happen across Scotland. This might include the Scottish National Investment bank, engagement with the UK Government, as well as ongoing industry engagement to uncover opportunities to support essential changes through investment and knowledge sharing.

I look forward to hearing from you about how we might input further to the Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan as it develops.

Yours sincerely,



John Davidson

Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Strategy

CC. Mairi Gougeon, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands

Màiri McAllan, Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero and Just Transition