

COP26 – Lorna Slater – words must be turned into actions

With all the world looking at Glasgow during COP26, and in the face of climate emergency, it is clear that the time to do something about climate change, no matter how small, is now.

Lorna Slater MSP is the Scottish Government Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity. We asked her for her views on COP and the climate emergency.



Co-Leaders of the Scottish Greens Patrick Harvie and Lorna Slater at Dynamic Earth in Edinburgh on the eve of their party conference PHOTO ©2021 The Edinburgh Reporter

Ms Slater said: “The COP26 climate conference has put the eyes of the world on Scotland. Leaders from around the world have gathered in Glasgow to discuss the climate crisis and how it can be addressed.

“A lot of these leaders are talking a good game, but, if the conference is to have the impact it needs to, then their words need to be turned into actions and fast. The UN has said it is “code red for humanity” and averting climate catastrophe must be the single biggest priority for every single government.

“There are things we can all do, but it’s not individuals who are responsible for climate change, it is polluters and governments. And it is the governments represented at COP

who have the power to make the biggest difference.

“In Scotland we are setting a strong example. With Greens in government, we are working together to build a greener, fairer and independent Scotland. Over this parliamentary term we will be investing in affordable transport that is safe and accessible for all, with free bus travel for young people, £5 billion for our rail network and £320 million for active travel infrastructure.

“Before I was elected to Holyrood, I was an engineer in the renewable energy sector. I have seen first-hand Scotland’s potential to lead the renewables charge. With less than 1% of the population of Europe, Scotland has 25% of Europe’s entire offshore wind power resources and 25% of Europe’s tidal energy resources.

“We will double Scotland’s onshore wind capacity and ensure a just transition to renewable energy which protects the planet and the economy. We will support our communities. No home will be left behind, with £1.8 billion to ensure warmer and greener homes.

“We will complement this with investment in nature and the restoration of our beautiful landscapes. One thing I am particularly looking forward to is the establishment of a new national park. This generation’s goal, and that of all governments, must be to leave things better than we found them for future generations to enjoy.

“In our movement we have an old saying, “Think globally, act locally”, and that is what we are doing. Although the focus of COP will be on Glasgow, every part of Scotland has a role to play if we are to build a greener future.

“I want to see an Edinburgh where the needs of people take precedence over the needs of cars. There needs to be liveable spaces, with less pollution around our homes, schools and streets. But what do liveable town and city centres look

like?

“Streets should be safe enough for everyone to walk, wheel and cycle to where they need to go. Parents should feel confident enough that their children have local spaces to play and grow. With active travel becoming easier I also want communities to be able to transform their urban spaces into connected and self-sufficient neighbourhoods.

“COP is the last big chance to act. I hope that when leaders come together, they will do more than agree some woolly words and moveable targets. I hope that they will deliver change and the action that we need.”



Lorna Slater, Scottish Greens Co-Leader during the 2021 election campaign. Photo: © 2021 Martin P. McAdam
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