

Monthly report on research and policy developments  
Energy and climate change

August 2023

**Purpose:** This document provides a summary of recent key developments in policy and research related to energy and climate change during August 2023. It has been prepared by [ClimateXChange](#) and is intended to keep policymakers informed of issues relevant to the Scottish Government's energy and climate change policy portfolio.



## International climate and energy research and policy

**UN calls for urgent action on climate change to protect children's rights** 28 August  
Climate change is affecting children's rights to life, survival and development, according to a report by the UN Child Rights Committee. The report states that young children's voices are rarely heard in climate change debates, even though they are most vulnerable to the impacts. There is new guidance for governments, which includes requirements for UN countries to protect children from the harmful effects of climate change, by monitoring air quality, regulating food safety and tackling emissions.  
Sources: [UN](#); [BBC](#)

**No agreement on a common deforestation target at Amazon Summit** 11 August  
Brazilian president Lula had hoped for agreement to end all deforestation in the Amazon by 2030, but no specific deforestation target was reached, according to Carbon Brief. However, the eight Amazon basin countries' leaders did commit to prevent the rainforest from reaching the tipping point threshold, which could alter the rainforest system completely.  
Source: [Carbon Brief](#)

**Maroš Šefčovič appointed as new EU climate policy leader** 23 August  
The European Commission has appointed Slovakia's Maroš Šefčovič to lead on climate policy, following the resignation of the Netherlands' Frans Timmermans last month. It is not

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clear whether his role is temporary, as a new commissioner is likely to be appointed by the Dutch Government.

Source: [Climate Home News](#)

**EU fossil fuel electricity falls to record low**

29 August

Electricity generated by fossil fuels in the European Union fell by 17% in the first six months of 2023, its lowest level since records began. The fall in demand was due to high gas and power prices, and emergency measures, according to a new report from energy analysts Ember. Solar power generation grew by 13% and wind generation by 5% compared to the same period last year.

Source: [Ember](#); [Carbon Brief](#)

**India on track to reach UN emission reduction goal**

10 August

India has reduced its greenhouse gas emissions rate by one-third in the past 14 years and is on track to reduce emissions by 45% from 2005 levels by 2030. The reduction is due to a rise in renewable energy generation and forest cover, according to the assessment made for submission to the United Nations.

Source: [Euronews](#)

**Germany likely to miss net zero targets**

22 August

Germany is failing to cut greenhouse emissions in the transport and building sectors, according to a report by climate advisers from its own government. This means it is unlikely to meet its 2030 target to cut emissions by 65% and the longer-term 2045 net zero target.

Source: [Climate Home News](#)

**Australia to acknowledge climate risk on government bonds**

30 August

The Australian Government agreed to publish a statement on a Treasury website acknowledging that climate change was a systemic risk that may affect bond value, following the first global court case of its kind.

Source: [The Guardian](#)

**Ecuadorians vote to reject oil drilling in the Amazon**

18 August

Oil drilling in the Yasuní National Park in Ecuador is to cease following a referendum in which 59% of voters supported leaving the oil in the ground. Ecuador's state-owned oil company currently produces more than 55,000 barrels of crude oil a day in the area, and now has a year to halt its operations. The national park is one of the most biodiverse areas on the planet.

Source: [Climate Home News](#)

**China to recycle solar panels and wind turbines**

17 August

China plans to set up a recycling system for older wind turbines and solar panels, according to a government official. The country is the world's biggest renewable equipment manufacturer and has increasing volumes of waste from the industry.

Source: [Climate Home News](#)

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**Fossil fuels subsidies reached a record US\$7 trillion in 2022**

24 August

Oil, gas and coal are being subsidised at a rate of US\$13 million per minute, according to analysis from the International Monetary Fund. The researchers state that cutting the subsidies should be a centrepiece of climate action, while acknowledging the political sensitivities and the need for policies to support poorer households, according to the Guardian.

Sources: [IMF](#); [The Guardian](#)

**Sweden plans to build at least 10 new nuclear reactors**

10 August

Sweden has announced that in order to meet its climate goals it plans to double its nuclear reactor capacity in the next 20 years. Environmental experts have warned it will be too expensive and will take too long to help with targets, according to the Guardian.

Source: [The Guardian](#)

**UK climate and energy research and policy**

**Hydrogen as a storage medium in Scotland**

30 August

The options for storing energy in the form of hydrogen in Scotland are explored in this report, which examines the suitability of different storage solutions based on variables such as geology, use case and timescales. Pressurised tanks and vessel storage, salt caverns, depleted gas fields and metal hydrides are among the storage options examined. The study found that hydrogen storage will play an important role in balancing an energy system that has large amounts of intermittent renewable energy.

Source: [ClimateXChange](#)

**UK Government publishes biomass strategy**

10 August, 18 August

The Biomass Strategy 2023 lays out the steps the UK Government intends to take to develop a sustainable, well-regulated biomass sector. A key commitment is to develop and implement a cross-sectoral common sustainability framework, subject to consultation. The document details the potential use of biomass across a number of sectors, including electricity, heating, transport, industry, hydrogen and non-energy uses, according to Carbon Brief.

Sources: [Biomass Strategy 2023](#); [Carbon Brief](#)

**New UK minister for energy security and net zero**

31 August

The UK Government named Claire Coutinho as the new Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero. She replaces Grant Shapps, who was appointed Secretary of State for Defence.

Source: [Reuters](#)

**Growth in UK rapid charging points for electric vehicles**

28 August

Hundreds of new high-speed electric vehicle chargers have been added to the UK network, according to the Guardian. Most UK regions installed over 100 rapid chargers in the last year. It is hoped this will make longer journeys easier in electric vehicles and encourage more people to buy electric cars.

Source: [The Guardian](#)

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**Scottish forestry and peatland restoration financing plans challenged** 19 August  
Land reform campaigners expressed unease over Scottish Government plans to leverage private funding of up to £2bn for new forests and peatland restoration. An analysis by Community Land Scotland questions the calculations used by NatureScot, according to the Guardian.

Source: [The Guardian](#)

**UK offshore wind industry warns of funding gap** 5 August  
Senior figures from the energy industry warned the UK Government that climate goals cannot be met without more funding for renewables.

Source: [The Guardian](#)

## **Climate science, impacts and adaptation**

### **Heat records broken around the world**

- **July 2023 is the hottest month on record** 14 August  
Along with the hottest July on record, sea ice was the lowest ever recorded, according to the World Meteorological Organisation. The El Nino weather phenomenon and climate change both influenced the record-breaking July temperatures, according to the Guardian.  
Sources: [WMO](#); [The Guardian](#)
- **Record heat affected the majority of people on the planet** 2 August  
Human-caused global warming made July hotter for four out of five people on Earth, according to an article in AP. More than 6.5 billion people experienced at least one day where climate change had a significant effect on the average daily temperature, while more than 2 billion people were affected by the increased heat on a daily basis throughout July, according to a report by Climate Central.  
Source: [AP](#)
- **Oceans hit hottest ever recorded temperature** 4 August  
The average daily global sea surface temperature was the hottest ever recorded at the start of August, breaking the 2016 record, according to the EU's climate change service Copernicus. The temperature reached 20.96C. Oceans are a vital climate regulator and heating can potential cause the melting of glaciers, sea level rise and changes to fish stocks, according to the BBC.  
Source: [BBC](#)

### **Heat events and fires linked to climate change**

- **Hawaii fires were much more dangerous due to climate change** 11 August  
The climate crisis was one of the factors that made fires in Hawaii worse, according to the Guardian. The fires resulted in the deaths of at least 55 people.  
Source: [The Guardian](#)
- **South American winter heatwaves more severe due to climate change** 14 August  
Temperatures in parts of Chile and northern Argentina were 10C to 20C above average in early August. Climate change is making the effects of a persistent area of high pressure and the El Nino weather phenomenon more severe.

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Source: [Climate Home News](#)

- **Canadian wildfires twice as likely due to climate change** 22 August

The largest Canadian wildfire season on record has resulted in almost 14m hectares being burned, according to the Guardian. Climate change made the fires at least twice as likely to occur and also caused the fire-prone weather to be at least 20% more intense, according to an attribution study.

Source: [The Guardian](#)

**Extreme Antarctic events will get worse without drastic action** 8 August

It is virtually certain that extreme events in Antarctica, such as the collapse of ice shelves and surface temperatures of up to 38.5C above average, will get worse without action to limit global heating. Antarctic change has global implications, scientists warn in a review published in *Frontiers in Environmental Science*. An ice breakup in 2022 resulted in the deaths of thousands of penguins in the Antarctic, according to the BBC.

Sources: [The Guardian](#); [Frontiers in Environmental Science](#); [BBC](#)

**Political influence of meat industry blocking green alternatives** 18 August

Meat and dairy industries in the EU and US are using their power to block the development of the greener alternatives required to tackle the climate crisis, according to a study discussed in a Guardian article. Researchers analysed lobbying, subsidies and regulations. They found that EU livestock farmers received 1,200 times more public funding than plant-based meat or cultivated meat groups. In the US, the animal farmers got 800 times more public funding.

Source: [The Guardian](#)

**Mediterranean droughts pose risk to healthy diets in the UK** 14 August

Mediterranean fresh fruit and vegetables will become more expensive and difficult to obtain due to extreme heat events caused by climate change. The impact of reduced yields on costs will make a healthy diet difficult to afford for the poorest in society, according to a report by the Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit. The UK is unable to grow many foods imported from the Mediterranean, for at least parts of the year, and many cannot be grown at the required scale. Those that are grown indoors use more expensive and energy-intensive processes. Foods that could be affected include cauliflowers, broccoli, strawberries, cucumbers, tomatoes and onions.

Source: [The Guardian](#)

**Climate change could lead to an increase in conflict deaths** 30 August

Climate change is likely to make conflicts worse in fragile and conflict-affected states, and could increase deaths by almost 10% by 2060, according to a report from the International Monetary Fund. The report states that although climate shocks do not cause conflicts, they exacerbate existing unrest and fragilities, such as hunger and poverty.

Source: [Reuters](#)

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