

SFC Alliances for Research Challenges (ARCs)

Expression of Interest – Cover Sheet

Proposed ARC Title	Scottish Climate Justice Alliance (SCJA)
Lead Partner	Professor Tahseen Jafry Director, Mary Robinson Centre for Climate Justice Glasgow Caledonian University e: t.jafry@gcu.ac.uk / t: +44 (0)1413318084
Confirmed interested universities/or organisations	Professor Tavis Potts Director, the Centre for Energy Transition University of Aberdeen e: tavis.potts@abdn.ac.uk/ t: +44 (0)1224 273837
Estimated budget	Up to £600k
Disciplines included:	4 years

Description of the proposed challenge area

Alignment with Scottish Government priorities

The specific aim of the Scottish Climate Justice Alliance (SCJA) is to foster and enable collaboration amongst Scottish institutions deepening knowledge, insight and research excellence on climate justice in Scotland; in pursuit of identifying and contributing to a fair and just transition to a low-carbon economy and promoting health and wellbeing particularly for the most climate vulnerable people. The SCJA will draw together expertise from a range of disciplines and sectors; educational institutions, Govt, NGOs, CSOs, and industry to collectively share resources and knowledge creating a Scottish climate justice landscape. It will lend it-self to consolidating the wealth of existing projects and initiatives harnessing lessons learned and visioning for the future. We intend for the outcomes from this work to feed into existing programmes of work such as Scottish Government National Performance Framework, the Just Transition Commission, Adaptation Scotland and Education Scotland. We consider that this research landscaping work will prepare Scotland for the seismic changes required across society, governance, and industry to tackle to climate emergency.

The overarching research theme of SCJA is ‘galvanising climate justice and a just transition to empower marginalised voices’.

The activities of the SCJA will focus on the most pressing sectoral challenges requiring further research and innovation as outlined by the Scottish Government’s 2020 climate policy update “Securing a green recovery on a path to net zero: climate change plan 2018–2032”. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on our society and economy has been immense, and lead to reflection among society on our relationship with each other and the world around us. This reflection has inspired the calls to move beyond the terrible situation of the few years and build back better through a just and green recovery. These calls were lent momentum by COP26 in Glasgow and the report “Scottish Government at COP26: What was achieved?” outlines next steps that include promoting climate justice, raising marginalised voices, achieving greater action by government, civil society, and the public, empowering children, building partnerships, and enhancing the profile of Scotland as a global climate justice leader and changemaker – all of which are activities that would be achieved by a Scottish Climate Justice Alliance.

The following themes will be our central research focus areas as we aim to answer the research questions as set out through a series of roundtable discussions, participatory workshops, case study field visits resulting in climate justice policy brief series, peer-reviewed journal publication/special issue and documentaries, and the development of research projects and applying for funding. We will create a climate justice repository to house the landscaping research information to be hosted on partners existing websites and to share on social media. The research questions for each sector are framed below based on Scotland’s climate policy priorities and future ambitions. However, the vision for the overall research will remain

flexible and responsive to outcomes from roundtable discussions and workshops, as well as future updates in Scottish Government priorities.

Energy: What are the interlinkages of the technological, social, economic and climate justice challenges in the energy sector, such as developing affordable and reliable renewable and clean energy technologies, improving energy efficiency, integrating smart grids, creating inclusive and value-for-money retail and energy markets, alleviating energy poverty, and implementing user-interfaces such as smart meters, among others?

Buildings: How can we implement energy efficiency technologies in a diverse range of household types living under different circumstances and enable consumer engagement with new energy systems, promote positive behavioural change in energy use, and develop best practices with energy retailers to assist households in energy poverty and other social vulnerabilities?

Transport – How can climate justice be considered in the context of promote place-based approaches, 20 min neighbourhoods? How do we ensure inclusivity in people’s ability to access affordable and reliable transport (e.g., socio-economic constraints, disability)?

Industry – What opportunities are there for training and reskilling of Scotland’s workforce to benefit from new low-carbon industries, as well as support local communities and businesses that are dependent on supply chains and other indirect economies from major employers?

Waste – How can we provide solutions on incorporating climate justice into food waste, resource use and responsible consumption and the sustainability agenda? What more needs to be done to enhance environmental education on connecting the circular economy with climate action and justice?

Land use, land use change, and forestry – How can climate justice be embedded in the context of improving forest cover, woodland carbon market, peatland restoration, resilience and adaptation, green spaces, flood defence, biodiversity loss, access to green infrastructure by most deprived communities?

Agriculture – What does climate justice mean for the sector in terms of high-quality food, environmental standards, emission reduction, rural support, advice and linking food and climate, food emissions, support to adapt to climate change?

Negative emission technologies – What are the implications of offsetting, hard to decarbonise sectors (e.g. steel, concrete, aviation) for achieving climate justice?

The proposed alliance would be in a unique position to draw on existing extensive Scottish expertise in the above themes and leading the narrative on

	<p>climate justice in Scotland. Not only does this prospect offer to bring about the realisation of climate justice and a just transition in Scotland, but these sectoral challenges are shared across much of Europe, as well as increasingly relevant in emerging economies, and Scotland’s experience can help shape a climate just future across the globe.</p>
<p>Multidisciplinary response & Scottish research excellence</p>	<p>The world is facing a global climate emergency, with 2030 as a pivotal moment to halve carbon emissions from across the globe and prevent global warming beyond 1.5°C, and this is reflected by Scotland’s ambitious goal of net-zero emissions by 2045. Yet, this goal will require significant societal shifts and major structural changes. The numerous sectoral challenges that have been identified by researchers, industry, and the Scottish Government are multi-dimensional challenges – with social, cultural, economic, and environmental dimensions that can intersect to compound challenges and even sometimes cause solutions to contradict each other. From behavioural change to new clean energy technologies, there is not a single academic discipline that provides all of the answers to the challenges that Scotland and the rest of the world face in tackling climate change. Rather, a multidisciplinary response is required to bring together institutions and organisations that represent Scotland’s research excellence to ensure sectoral challenges are not researched in silos but bring together expertise that can approach challenges from multiple angles. In this respect, the concept of climate justice, championed by the Scottish Government, is an effective framework to provide a common language that can be used by academics from very different disciplinary traditions, industry, government, and the public. Climate justice and a just transition have entered the vocabulary by a diverse group of stakeholders in part due to it’s people-focused approach and can align the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences under one roof.</p>
<p>Breadth and specificity</p>	<p>The proposed research themes for SCJA is reflective of the breadth of sectors that are affected by climate action, as justified by the enormity of climate change-related academic publications on these research themes and Scottish Government’s own climate change policies and interventions with such sectors. The specific focus of the proposed alliance, however, is climate justice and just transition. This focus is justified not only by the growing relevance of this concept to a diverse range of stakeholders, including academia, governments, and grassroots community groups, as the most effective means to bring about equitable climate action, but also has been solidified as an international framework for climate action – with mention in the 2015 Paris Agreement and significant placement in the Glasgow Climate Pact 2021.</p> <p>This said, further research themes would naturally be expected to arise as Scotland and the rest of the world seek to tackle the immense challenge of climate change and do so in a fair and equitable manner.</p>
<p>Current or future funding opportunities</p>	<p>The alliance would pursue the following funding sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scottish Government funds: Industry-related technological funds, e.g. Scottish Industrial Energy Transformation Fund, would be relevant funding sources. However, specifically, the “Just Transition Fund” and “Climate Justice Fund” would be the most relevant sources of funding.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UK funds: The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC), and Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTP) would be the primary sources of funding opportunities offered by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). However, other sources would include the British Academy, Royal Society of Edinburgh, Leverhulme Trust, and Wellcome Trust. • European Union funds: Supporting the development and recruitment of academic talent in Scotland, the alliance would specifically pursue funding from the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Doctoral Networks and Postdoctoral Fellowships, as well as specific calls announced by Horizon Europe on research themes covered by this alliance.
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<p>Prospective coalition members</p>	<p>Scottish Higher Education and Research Institutions: Glasgow Caledonian University University of Aberdeen European Marine Energy Centre Heriot-Watt University University of Edinburgh University of Strathclyde University of the Highlands and Islands Scottish Agricultural College (SAC) Scottish Carbon Capture & Storage (SCCS)</p> <p>Scottish Government, Councils, & Bodies: Highland and Island Enterprise Glasgow City Council Edinburgh City Council Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)</p> <p>Industry and business groups: Zero Waste Scotland Scottish Renewables Scottish Power Port of Aberdeen / Aberdeen Harbour</p> <p>Community organisations: Sustrans Energy Action Scotland (EAS) Home Energy Scotland</p>
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<p>Added benefit of SFC funding</p>	<p>The added benefits of SFC funding would include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SFC funding would be a catalyst for Scottish research excellence on climate justice and just transition, an area of research and policy with a global relevance yet remains under-researched and under-utilized. • SFC funding would also further enhance Scotland’s reputation as an advocate for climate justice and just transition in climate negotiations and would represent a concrete outcome of Scotland’s stated ambitions and next steps following COP26 and going into future negotiations. • In terms of visibility of the alliance, SFC funding would create a clear contact point to access Scottish expertise on equitable and fair climate action, and the alliance would benefit greatly in reach through a close relationship with SFC and its partners.
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