

Address:
110 George Street
Edinburgh
EH2 4LH

Telephone:
0845 146 1010
Fax:
0845 146 1009

Website:
www.audit-scotland.gov.uk



Press release

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Scotland's public sector must use energy more efficiently

Tackling climate change and making the best use of resources require the efficient use of energy. The public sector in Scotland has made some progress in using energy more efficiently. However, spending on fuel and power by the country's public bodies has increased significantly because of rising prices.

An Audit Scotland report published today, *Improving energy efficiency*, looks at how councils, the NHS and central government bodies are improving energy efficiency in their buildings and transport use.

The report says there is a need for stronger leadership on energy efficiency from both the Scottish Government and within public bodies themselves. This will ensure public bodies develop and implement good quality energy strategies, and make the necessary changes to culture and behaviour.

The Auditor General for Scotland, Robert Black, said: "The public sector should give greater priority to energy efficiency for both environmental and financial reasons. Improving energy efficiency can be one of the easiest and most cost-effective ways to enhance the public sector's contribution to addressing the challenges of climate change. It should also reduce the impact of rising energy prices on public services.

"There has been some progress, and the Scottish Government's publication last week of its draft Climate Change Bill is an encouraging step. However, there is still a need for the government and public bodies to give strong leadership to deliver improvements in energy efficiency and the public sector's contribution to tackling climate change."

John Baillie, Chair of the Accounts Commission, said: "Councils have reduced their energy consumption by five per cent in the three years up to the end of March 2007. Continuing this progress will help councils to achieve the commitments outlined in Scotland's Climate Change Declaration. It will also help them to manage the effects of rising energy prices."

The report finds that the public sector cut its energy use in public buildings by 4.8 per cent between 2004/05 and 2006/07. But over the same period spending on energy rose by 46.7 per cent, due to increases in fuel and power costs. Collectively, councils and the NHS spend the most on energy, and have made the greatest efforts to improve their energy efficiency.

For further information please contact Simon Ebbett on 0131 625 1652 or Anne McCubbin on 0131 625 1653

Notes to editors

1. In 2006/07 councils, NHS boards and central government bodies spent at least £224 million on energy. Between July 2004 and June 2008 the prices of gas and electricity doubled, and diesel rose by 47 per cent and petrol by 38 per cent between January 2004 and September 2008.
2. All Audit Scotland reports published since 2000 can be found on our website www.audit-scotland.gov.uk
3. Audit Scotland is a statutory body set up in April 2000, under the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act, 2000. Audit Scotland has prepared this report jointly for the Auditor General for Scotland and the Accounts Commission for Scotland:
 - The Auditor General is responsible for securing the audit of the Scottish Executive and most other public bodies in Scotland, except local authorities. He investigates whether spending bodies achieve the best possible value for money and adhere to the highest standards of financial management. The Auditor General is independent and is not subject to the control of the Scottish Executive or the Scottish Parliament.

- The Accounts Commission for Scotland was set up in 1975 and is independent of both central and local government. The commission checks whether local authorities, fire and police boards spend £9 billion of public money properly and effectively.