

MEETING NOTE - G6 ENVIRONMENTAL NGOS

5 OCTOBER 2011

Present

Scottish Government

- Stewart Stevenson, Minister for Environment and Climate Change
- Gabby Pieraccini, Climate Change: Targets and Legislation
- Billy McKenzie, Agriculture and Rural Development
- Gareth Heavisides, Natural Resources Division

G6 Environmental NGOs

- Richard Dixon, Director, WWF Scotland
- Stuart Housden, Director, RSPB Scotland
- Stan Blackley, CEO, Friends of the Earth Scotland
- Simon Milne, CEO, Scottish Wildlife Trust
- Eila Macqueen, vice-chair/Trustee, Scottish Environment LINK (and CEO Archaeology Scotland)
- Kate Mavor, CEO, National Trust for Scotland

Welcome and Introductions

This was the first meeting of the G6 with Stewart Stevenson, Minister for Environment and Climate Change. G6 and the Minister welcomed the resumption of these meetings and it was agreed that these would continue to be held quarterly.

Budget

This item focused on the spending review announcement 2011.

G6 welcomed the maintenance of funding for national parks and commented that changes to SEPA and SNH budgets were much as expected although they were concerned about cuts to SRDP allocations and Marine Scotland.

The Minister noted that the agri-environment Rural Priorities budget had been reduced, but that take-up, rather than funding, was the key issue for designated site management. The G6 can play a role in encouraging applications to benefit designated sites

Although the agri-environment budget has reduced within the SRDP, Ministers have demonstrated their ongoing commitment via a new round of applications. The Minister also stated that important issue we all need to focus on for the future is ensuring the reduced spend which will be available as a result of UK cuts is focussed on investing in areas that deliver robust outcomes.

Historic factors also played a part in this and the SG would be pressing to make sure Scotland received its full allocation under CAP reform and wanted all to be involved in promoting that case.

It was noted that while Marine Scotland had taken a budget cut, they would still have the resources in place to make sure renewables are sited appropriately. This will

depend on the scientific input of Marine Scotland and making sure the correct research and evidence base is there when decisions are made. It was agreed that good science should underpin any decision of this kind.

The G6 noted that SNH previously had funds allocated for designated sites and these sites are now not getting the focus they did in the past. The Minister commented that SNH had been refocused as an adviser rather than a regulator and there was a need to take into account a wide range of factors in terms of benefits conservation can bring to communities. Applications through SRDP for conservation of designated sites had a very high success rate but the number of applications had been limited.

Review of Scotland's Biodiversity Strategy

Some members of the G6 had attended the meeting of the Scottish Biodiversity Committee (SBC) on 21 September at which this item had been discussed in detail. The G6 welcomed the direction the SBC had taken and the sense of purpose it provided. In particular:

- The G6 welcomed the intention to align with the EU biodiversity strategy
- Stressed that there was a key role for SG agencies and that they need to take their biodiversity obligations to heart and become exemplars of good practice
- They appreciated the comments from SNH at the SBC about the need for a socio-economic focus but stressed that the intrinsic value of nature was equally important.
- Implementation of the existing strategy had been 'process heavy' and needs to be delivery focused
- The existing strategy had promoted homogeneity across different projects and there needed to be a recognition that some projects are specialised/focused.

The G6 wanted the SG to:

- Ensure regulatory/policy angles are aligned
- Promote and implement the message across government policy areas
- Give 'fair wind' to the NGOs to go out and deliver
- Help in the prioritisation process
- Analyse why the 2010 targets had not been met

The Minister commented that he welcomed the input of the NGOs to the review process and would welcome specific examples of where process had hindered delivery.

The Minister recognised that the 2010 targets had been missed and commented that this was a cause for concern. However, there had been significant progress compared to many areas of the EU and that we would need to continue to push the case internationally over the long term.

Corncrakes were highlighted as an example of where evidence based research had been used to develop measures that had proved successful.

ACTION: G6 to provide examples of where process has hindered biodiversity delivery.

Climate Change and RPP

The G6 recognised the challenge presented by the tough budget position, and were relieved that the outcome of the spending review for climate change was not worse than it was. Nevertheless, the NGOs registered that the Spending Review was the first key test for delivery of the RPP, and while acknowledging the efforts made to place climate change at the heart of decisions, concluded that the Spending Review fell well short of funding the action in the RPP required to meet statutory climate change targets.

The G6 asked about the transition from RPP1 to RPP2, and the Minister explained that RPP2 would essentially redefine the package of action from the present to the new timescale set by the new annual targets for 2023-2027.

Two areas in the spending review were of particular concern to the G6 in terms of support for the action in the RPP: housing and transport. Concerns on transport focused on the scale of the road elements of the Budget; and on housing the point for concern was the assumptions made about what UHIS and other measures could deliver for the funds allocated. The NGOs noted the progress that had been made in mainstreaming climate change action across portfolios, but registered concerns about whether climate change was yet at the forefront of all Ministers' decision-making process, and offered their support to the Minister in his efforts to ensure that all Ministers became climate change Ministers. The Minister indicated his intention to continue with the mainstreaming agenda, and encouraged the NGOs to help stimulate debate on ideas for actions to reduce emissions that were not already in the RPP, and agreed with the G6 that the economic and social perspectives could be much more powerful than the environmental argument.

The G6 were also interested in the detail of the Future Transport Fund. The Minister commented that they would need to speak to the Transport Minister about that if they wanted more detail.

The G6 welcomed the publication of the Land Use Strategy and were keen to engage further through a stakeholder forum. The Minister commented that the LUS is a work in progress, possibly the first of its kind in the world, and that it will be further developed but it had to be recognised that this was being carried forward with limited resources, including reduced numbers of officials.

In context of wider work around international engagement Scotland has agreed to host an IPCC research meeting in the new year. This will draw a number of experts from across the world and consider methodologies to support potential inclusion of wetlands in the carbon accounting inventory

G6 noted that Denmark had recently followed Scotland's lead on climate change targets and that they were keen to learn from Scottish experience. The Minister

commented that the SG is keen to help all it can within the resource limitations that exist.