

Note on a liaison meeting between Scottish Government Ministers and Scottish Environment LINK on the theme of climate change, held 27 February 2008.

Introductions

Scottish Government: Michael Russell, Minister for Environment, chaired the meeting.
 Stewart Stevenson, Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and climate change (had to leave early)
 Jim Mather, Minister for Enterprise, Energy and Tourism.
 John Mason, Director Climate Change and Water Industry.
 Ian Hooper, Landscape and Habitats.
 Gabby Pieracinni, Business Manager.
 Scott Sutherland, Mike Russell's Private Secretary .

The LINK delegation introduced themselves first in their capacity as representatives of LINK groupings on climate related issues, (e.g. climate, agriculture, transport, landscape, forestry), citing their organisational identity last.

John Mayhew (Chair) Helen McDade (Landscape TF, JMT) Clifton Bain (CCTF RSPB) Davie Black (CCTF (transmission) RAS), John Lauder (CCTF (transport), Carey Coombs (Agric TF, SAS), Gordon Gray Stevens (WTF, SNW), Alice Walsh (staff).

Key priorities for legislation.

Given forthcoming meetings with SCCS/LINK and ScotGov on the detail of the consultation, Clifton briefly outlined the SCCS headline asks which LINK supports, emphasising our particular focus on sustainability safeguards to ensure environmental assets are not damaged and the ability of those assets to support mitigation and adaptation efforts if they are protected and enhanced; all aspects benefit (the win win scenario) if biodiversity is robust enough to cope. Scotland has the tools and structures in place to make biodiversity robust, they need to be well resourced, and additional pressures removed. More work needed on monitoring wildlife and on helping make wider countryside accessible to wildlife change.

Mike Russell referred to an initiative announced at the previous day's SNIFFER conference on a large scale forestry and woodland project FCS will be leading on. Other initiatives are to come.

Stewart Stevenson noted that the bill itself needs to adapt to the evolving science, and ScotGov's wish to be driven by objective evidence and to demonstrate the link with emerging scientific advice. There is plenty of support for the 80% reduction target which is achievable here though perhaps not in other countries. 3% annual reduction is a minimum, not the limit to ambitions year on year. There will be annual reporting and accounting to Parliament – want a broad envelope to show we are making improvements.

On aviation and shipping Scotland is looking to UK and the EU to deal with these, and supports their inclusion in emissions trading. SS referred to recent visit to Insh Marshes as illustration of the value of flood plains, and recognised the need to protect such assets.

SS said that the 3% issue would be a big discussion he didn't want boxed in by it and felt that bigger reductions could be made at different times, and that there was the problem of severe winters. Clifton explained 3% is the minimum necessary and should be our bottom line for annual reductions and that we believe the Government can still achieve this. SS agreed to Clifton's suggestion of further meetings down the line. He also agreed that biodiversity objectives can deliver cc objectives and health and social benefits – they were "trying to optimise the system called Scotland."

MR noted that ScotGov's 5 objectives made these cross cutting issues more obvious, noting that cc issues came up at the forestry debate, Forestry includes objectives on health and access, and biodiversity indicators now include membership of environmental groups and access to the countryside. He made two points on legislation: the Flooding bill will be introduced before the summer and all input we can make will be welcome, and the role for LINK to assist rationality in the marine legislation.

Jim Mather said they were putting strong signals out on their energy strategy including the announcement of the Scottish European Green Energy centre in Aberdeen, and energy technology partnerships between energy organisations and academics (mentioned Loughborough), keen for Scotland to get a good share of the contracts. They are broadcasting their intentions, here and in Europe, bolstered by the anti-nuclear stance, to signal investment in the alternatives. Renewables export has great potential, and the Crown Estate is interested in returns from sub sea interconnector. Looking at parallels with British Columbia. Scotland is in a powerful position, energy is the crux of economic recovery (referred to RBS 2004 report *Wealth Creation in Scotland: A Study of Scotland's Top 100 companies*).

MR spoke of concern to have the environmental component in the energy debate. December's debate featured Forestry and Biomass, planning issues, Wood Fuel and others, landscape, EU legislation – he is talking to member bodies individually also and discussing how to balance matters of judgement. He was keen to assure us its in their thinking and tied to the economic aim of sustainable development in Scotland, all was interconnected in a sustainable energy policy.

Questioned about the Energy Strategy JM said it will happen shortly. June 2007 was the first of a series of brainstorming sessions on renewables and community benefits to which various stakeholders contributed. Professor Jim McDonald (Chair Energy Technology Partnerships) has been splitting energy stakeholders into various components. Asked about opportunities for participation, he said they were open to dialogue all the time and willing to engage with self nominated sectors, anyone with issues to raise just needs to fill a room and map out the views there. He is looking for an enhanced level of debate by involving different sectors. He accepted LINK view that we needed industry and environment players in the same room.

Helen McDade welcomed the approach and indicated LINK's desire to take part in the process. She advocated the energy hierarchy approach as another win-win approach for various decision makers looking at different projects at the right level, eg SEA of the climate change programme, and also used in SEA of the NPF2 but which is not so well reflected in the core NPF consultation document. This EH approach clears up the 'economic versus environment' arguments and is also applicable to other issues such as waste.

JM said he was very keen and would welcome participation. The industrial sector is coming forward with a good number of events they are planning to run, now inviting ScotGov to these, rather than ScotGov organising them. 18 sectors are activated and working away, which could increase to 40. He mentioned healthcare, textiles, life sciences.

MR added that a report of the National Economic Forum meeting (6/2/08) which should be on the SGov website soon has a useful note on the green theme.

Transport

John Lauder explained LINK's vision for a transport system that encourages people to help their health and wellbeing and reduce the need for fuel, especially for short journeys. We are interested to hear any plans to minimise the need to travel. He cited the recent National Institute for Clinical Excellence report calling for a physical environment that encourages active travel. LINK was pleased at recent indications supporting active travel from the

transport team through concerned about levels of funding, currently £1 per head of population, needing sums like £10 per head.

SS recognised car use as the greatest challenge, no progress though bus and rail use are up now (1% and 4-7% respectively). NPF 2 aspiration to electrify all rail by 2020. Minimising travel is a good point, more can be done to reorganise work patterns. He noted that previous policies, eg zoning for housing, have been unhelpful and recognises that hybrid work / residential areas are compatible. Sustainable towns – watch this space. Sullivan report (Low carbon buildings standards strategy for Scotland) is helpful. SS personally has lost considerable weight from exercise and significantly reduced his car use – keen on himself and others setting a personal example. When asked he said he would prefer to say he did not respond to the suggestion of increasing the budget to £10 per head, not that he was comfortable with the suggestion (SS left at this stage).

Land Use

MR responded to Carey Coomb's introduction of interactions between land use and climate change issues, including soils as carbon store, methane emissions from livestock, uplands management; farmers and land managers being in the front line of dealing with the issues and the need for a better strategy, by saying that he would want to talk to LINK and others in more detail about the SDRP measures. MR noted that the soils strategy was nearly complete and that Scotland would be in a good position, recognised the difficulties ahead and would do the right things. ScotGov funding research on methane emissions and will act on the findings. Carey noted the opportunity to integrate with the food policy strategy, and that upland management was crucial. MR responded that strategies etc need to be appropriate to a small country of 5m, that the issues were being connected across ScotGov, and that he perceived that there were more fissures and fragmentation outside government than inside it.

Gordon Gray Stevens introduced several concerns raised in LINK's response to the **Wood Fuel** TF paper submitted before the meeting. MR felt the language to be unnecessarily combative, and that there was much common ground and little divergence on the issues. Gordon noted that LINK had unsuccessfully requested involvement in the Wood Fuel task force, which prompted the need to comment from LINK's perspective. The Minister stressed that he did not want forestry to become dominated by single purpose production for carbon. Clifton asked how, when the drivers come from a wrong direction, Govt will interfere to keep the LINK and Govts shared vision for multibenefit sustainable forestry. MR noted that eternal vigilance was needed. He referred to a mind mapping meeting on forestry coming up in Argyll, that LINK would be welcome to participate in, and would arrange a meeting between FCS and LINK to resolve the issue and come up with a joint position.

John Mason mentioned that a 3 hours session on the **food issues** had taken a systems approach which touched on every issue that LINK had raised in the agenda. Food was a good issue for a systems approach with lessons applicable to other sectors as it develops over the year. LINK welcomed this, Carey noting that systems research is very difficult and a vision is needed. MR said the research budget is being turned 'tanker-like' to the important issues.

Helen raised the issue (for Jim Mather's benefit) of **landscape**, vital to the economy via tourism though often overlooked due to the lack of legal protection – it's the poor relation of biodiversity in this regard, and that a national landscape statement would be useful.

MR responded that he would meet the Landscape Forum again, and had spoken to Isobel Glasgow the previous week. He felt there were no material differences though differences of approach. He wanted to see the designation system simplified and made intelligible.

Grid

Davie Black introduced the Grid issue and LINK concerns about how will it be known whether local authorities fall short or overshoot their capacities for onshore wind generation.

JM said this was evolving. ETPs were interested in the totality of capacity. BWE was looking at wave and tidal capacity. He likened it to the pc revolution, noting that it can appear chaotic, but that the signals ScotGov was putting out and the interesting checks and balances by various stakeholders is self-ordering. He linked it to the desire to see people of working age engaged in meaningful work, eg trying to create a climate of innovation on Islay (farmers and biomass), which can be transformative for communities. Davie welcomed the fact that SGov is taking the disinterested (or independent) advice of Prof McDonald. JM said they were engaged with OFGEM at the highest level, and that it being the specialist subject of the First Minister helped make a forceful case with others.

Summer tours

MR gave advance notice of his and R Lochhead's availability for site visits to help them focus better on relevant issues. If members can bring together gatherings of 100-150 people outside the central belt they are open to invitations to put on a cooperative show. Suggestions to Gabby Pieracinni in the first instance.

Next meetings

MR suggested Monday or Tuesday for next time to allow for a longer meeting (voting deadline on Weds).

Actions

1. Gabby Pieracinni will consult colleagues and get back to LINK with information on the energy strategy events and how to get involved. If LINK members have been involved in any of the discussions to date, please let the office know.
2. Minister to arrange a meeting between LINK and FCS on the wood fuel issue.
3. Gordon Gray Stevens and WTF to be invited to the FCS mind mapping exercise in Argyll.
4. Members to contact Gabby Pieracinni with suggestions of site visits over the summer recess.
5. Further meetings were agreed on the SDRP and on 3% year on year reductions to be pursued as relevant TFs prioritise.