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Energy Consents Unit
Scottish Government
2nd Floor
Meridian Court
5 Cadogan Street
Glasgow
G2 6AT



Scottish Environment LINK
2 Grosvenor House
Shore Road
Perth
PH2 8BD

Tel 01738 630804
Fax 01738 643290

enquiries@scotlink.org
www.scotlink.org

Scottish Environment LINK Climate Change Task Force

The consenting process for thermal power stations in Scotland

A response to the Scottish Government consultation on the guidance note on Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 under which Scottish Ministers determine consents for proposed thermal power stations

Scottish Environment LINK is the forum for Scotland's voluntary environment organisations - 32 member bodies representing a broad spectrum of environmental interests with the common goal of contributing to a more environmentally sustainable society. LINK assists communication between member bodies, government and its agencies and other sectors within civic society. Acting at local, national and international levels, LINK aims to ensure that the environment is fully recognised in the development of policy and legislation affecting Scotland.

This response is supported by the following organisations:

Badenoch and Strathspey Conservation Group
Friends of the Earth Scotland
RSPB Scotland
Woodland Trust
WWF Scotland

Scottish Environment  The voice of Scotland's environment movement

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Summary

Scottish Environment LINK welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation. LINK member bodies are concerned by the serious impacts of climate change here in Scotland, as well as the human and environmental consequences across the globe. Urgent action is required to cut greenhouse gas emissions, and our comments below are framed by this concern.

We welcome the Scottish Government's commitment in the Climate Change (Scotland) Bill to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by at least 80% by 2050, and to achieving 20% of total Scottish energy use coming from renewable sources by 2020.

In this context, we are concerned by proposals for new unabated coal capacity in Scotland, as coal is the most carbon intensive of all fossil fuels. LINK believes that, given the climate change targets to deliver an 80% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, it is not justifiable to allow the building of any new fossil fuel power stations in Scotland which do not have full-scale Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) installed and operating from the outset.

We are concerned that "carbon capture readiness" (CCR) may be used as a fig leaf – in the current proposals there are no guarantees of when, if at all, CCS would be fitted.

LINK supports the application of a greenhouse gas emissions performance standard to new electricity power plants in Scotland.

Question 1 - Scottish Ministers are therefore minded to insist that developers demonstrate that all new fossil fuel power stations over 300MWe in Scotland demonstrate CCR. Do you agree?

No. LINK believes that the Scottish Government must go further than simply requiring developers to "demonstrate carbon capture readiness".

The consultation itself lays out four elements that constitute CCR¹:

- *suitable space on the installation site for the equipment necessary to capture and compress CO₂, plus assessments of*
- *the availability of suitable storage sites*
- *suitable transport facilities; and*
- *the technical feasibility of retrofitting for CO₂ capture.*

In our assessment, none of these factors give any guarantee that CCS will be implemented in the future, nor any timeline for so doing. A developer could, under these criteria, demonstrate CCR without ever having to develop and implement fully operational carbon capture and storage. Therefore "CCR readiness" could very well be meaningless in terms of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

We agree with Scottish Minister's decision that to *"do nothing, and leave it entirely to companies to make their own judgement about future regulatory and planning arrangements concerning power stations over their expected operational life"* is not acceptable.

However, LINK strongly urges the Scottish Government to ensure greenhouse gas emissions are reduced by implementing an emissions performance standard (EPS) in Section 36 guidance under the Electricity Act 1989. Without an EPS, any new thermal power stations could well lock us into high emissions from the energy sector for another 40-50 years.

The introduction of an Emission Performance Standard would set maximum thresholds for the emission-intensity of power generation (e.g. gCO₂/kWh) and could lead to more efficient and sustainable energy production. This regulatory mechanism has been used before at an EU level with other emissions, such as sulphur dioxide (SO₂) and nitrous oxides (NO_x).

In 2007 California set a precedent by introducing an EPSⁱⁱ, and similar schemes have been introduced in Washington, Oregon and Montana. In October 2008, MEPs sitting on the European Parliament's Environment Committee voted for a similar EPS carbon dioxide emissions limit in an amendment to the draft Directive on Geological Storage of Carbon Dioxide.

LINK supports an EPS level of 350 gCO₂/kWh, which would allow both new combined cycle gas fired plants with some heat recovery and coal-fired plants using fully operational CCS. This in no way risks our energy security as it relies on existing technology such as gas CHP which is already in operation across Europe.

Question 5 - Do you agree that developers should have suitable space on site or adjacent to it to accommodate future carbon capture and processing plant?

No, LINK urges the Government to ensure implementation of CCS on any new coal power capacity by implementing an EPS of 350g CO₂/kWh.

However, if Ministers decide that the CCR route is acceptable, it is essential that developers have suitable space to accommodate carbon capture and processing plants. This is only one of a number of considerations which would have to be in place to ensure a route to CCS and a requirement for space alone would be redundant.

Question 14 - Do you agree a plant should only be consented if the studies and assessments carried out enable the consenting body to judge it capable of being built CCR.

No. The expert analysis of the term CCR commissioned by WWFⁱⁱⁱ has clearly shown that there is far too much ambiguity and uncertainty surrounding the many components of CCR for it to have any value. This is why a rigorous EPS

is needed to prevent unabated coal development that would effectively lock us into a high carbon power sector.

Question 15 - Should the final drafting of the EU directive allow should Scottish Ministers be able to consent to new power stations that do not meet all the four factors that underpin the CCR criterion in some circumstances? If yes, what might such circumstances be?

No. As we outlined above, we do not believe the CCR criteria to be sufficient or adequate to ensure our climate change targets are not jeopardised by new, unabated coal power. Should Ministers decide to take a CCR approach, rather than implementing a rigorous EPS, any exemption for new power stations would weaken regulation even further. LINK would be seriously concerned by such an approach. An EPS is a cross-technology regulatory tool which could be implemented regardless of the wording of the EU Directive.

If you have any queries about this submission, please contact the LINK Climate TaskForce:

Convener: Dr Sam Gardner, Climate Change Policy Officer, Tel. 01350 728 249, Email sggardner@wwfscotland.org.uk

Vice Convener: Corinne Evans, Head of Campaigns, Tel. 0131 243 2722, Email cevens@foe-scotland.org.uk

ⁱ See: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2008:0018:FIN:EN:PDF>

ⁱⁱ See: http://www.energy.ca.gov/emission_standards/index.html

ⁱⁱⁱ See http://assets.wwf.org.uk/downloads/evading_capture_brief.pdf