

Scottish Environment LINK Briefing on Climate Change and the EU



Emissions Targets

We believe there are strong arguments that Scotland's approach to emission reduction targets should be followed by the EU if we are to be serious in our approach to tackling Climate Change.

- The Scottish Government and Scotland supports moving the current EU 2020 target from -20% to -30%, on the way to needed -40%. This change is good for Europe and good for Scotland. Scotland has a plan of action to achieve its 42% target and is committed to achieving this. Scotland believes that an EU target of -30% can be achieved, will put the EU target closer to the required scientific trajectory and will generate important investment within the EU in the growth of a new global low carbon economy
- Increasing this target ensures the balance of effort in hitting our 42% 2020 target is shared across the Scottish economy. The current low target of just -20% and the need to avoid double counting only serves to pull down the emissions reduction contribution required from Scotland's power sector, and ensures the rapid growth in our renewables industry is not fully accounted for.
- The shift to a 30% target is needed to correct the EU emissions trajectory and put it on the right path to hit the needed reduction of 80 - 95% by 2050. The EU's own assessment, backed up by further independent analysis (<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/10/618&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>)
- shows that meeting a 30% target is now almost as inexpensive as meeting a 20% was estimated to be in 2008.
- Given the growing political momentum behind a move to 30%, coupled with the economic evidence for such a shift in the target what does Commissioner Hedegaard understand as the many milestones and timetable to the resolution of this debate well in advance of COP 17 in Durban?

The strings to Scotland's bow

In addition to these broad points with regard to targets, LINK is of the view that Scotland offers many positives in its approach. In particular we think that Scotland should trumpet its work on

- **renewable energy** (on land and in the marine environment);
- **land use strategy** (with what we hope will be a much improved final strategy);
- **adaptation** (especially managed coastal realignment); and
- the emergence of **peatland restoration and maintenance** as an important issue.

Peatlands are extremely important in the global carbon cycle.

- The stock of carbon they store is 3 times that of all forests and other vegetation. **A loss of just 1.6% of peatland carbon is equivalent to the total annual human carbon emissions** (Prof Pete Smith, University of Aberdeen <http://www.iucn-uk-peatlandprogramme.org/sites/all/files/Peatlands%20and%20the%20climate%20challenge%20in%20the%20UK,%20Pete%20Smith.pdf>)
- Scotland's peatlands store 200 times the carbon in the country's total annual ghg emissions.

However, current land management practice involving drainage for agriculture and forestry along with fires and grazing can damage peatlands resulting in loss of the stored carbon.

- Significant areas of Scotland's peatlands are in unfavourable condition and risk losing carbon. Even in the best protected areas of blanket bogs designated as SSSIs, 38% are in unfavourable condition. Much wider areas of Scotland's peatlands are in a damaged state.

Rewetting peatlands has been shown to restore peat forming vegetation to damaged peatlands and reduce carbon losses.

- Research in the Flow Country is among the World's leading peatland restoration projects.
- Positive habitat management measures using agri-environment payments, EU Life funding and rural development funds have helped restore large areas of Scotland's peatlands but greater resources are required to deliver targets of 600,000ha bog to be restored.
- Global climate change discussions under the Kyoto Protocol are considering new proposals to include peatland rewetting in national greenhouse gas accounting. There is an urgent need for these proposals to be concluded and for IPCC guidance to be issued in readiness for the post 2012 accounting period.

<http://www.iucn-uk-peatlandprogramme.org/sites/all/files/IUCN%20UK%20Peatland%20Programme%20briefing%20on%20Kyoto%20Protocol%20and%20National%20Accounting,%20January%202011%20revised.pdf>

Conserving and Restoring damaged peatlands brings wider benefits of importance to national and international (EU) priorities for biodiversity and water

- Scotland supports some of the EU's most important peatland habitats designated under EU Habitats and Birds Directives.

Key issues for the EU:

1. **The EU has a block position in support of peatland rewetting under proposed new LULUCF rules. Is the EU pursuing this urgently to ensure the rules and accompanying guidance will be in place by the next reporting phase after 2012?**
2. **Can greater EU focus be placed on peatlands under EU CAP reforms to encourage better funding for rural land managers who maintain and restore peatlands, in recognition of the multiple benefits for carbon, water and biodiversity?**
3. **Can Scotland work with EU Commission to offer cases studies on biodiversity providing climate change mitigation benefits?**

At a Scottish level LINK suggest that the Scottish Government:

- needs to set up a group involving NGOs and Agencies – with strong Ministerial direction - to agree actions for promoting and funding peatlands and securing some key restoration sites;
- should lead the call for clear inclusion of peatland conservation and restoration as a priority under CAP;
- support the work of the IUCN UK peatland Programme;
- attend and participate in the IUCN UK Peatland Prog Conference in Stirling in June 20th – 22nd; and
- for the sake of credibility (in the UK and the EU) move swiftly to match the English target to eliminate the use of peat in amateur gardening by 2020 look to phase out the use of peat in industry by 2030. DEFRA issued a consultation on the subject in December 2010 and similar action is required here.

Other Issues

There are several points where LINK is in disagreement with developments in Scotland with regard to fighting climate change, including:

- Road, bridge and motorway developments;
- The slow pace of progress towards cutting energy use; and
- Over-reliance on voluntarism and avoiding regulation.

While we debate these issues though, LINK is of the view that the Scottish positives are of major EU-wide relevance.

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