

Scotland's Climate Change Adaptation Programme

Summary

- Scotland needs its emerging Climate Change Adaptation Programme to be both sustainable and properly co-ordinated;
- LINK is concerned that there is considerable work to be done to develop policies in order to meet the challenges – and be worthy of inclusion in Scotland's Adaptation Programme.
- LINK is concerned that the Scottish Government's development of the Programme is not sufficiently prioritised or following adaptation principles, and that the funding is opaque.
- LINK suggests that the RACCE Committee scrutinises the process of Programme development and the draft Programme, and asks questions about funding - at an early stage so that we are sure we are getting it right.

Scotland needs to plan now for the consequences and impacts of our changing climate. We are already observing climate change and the impacts it is having. These are likely to continue and increase because of the greenhouse gases (GHGs) already in the atmosphere. We need to halt further climate change and extreme impacts by reducing GHG emissions. We also need to adapt how we run our economy, our society and our lives – and how we look after our environment.

Adaptation is the term used to describe our responses to a changing climate. Adaptation is inevitable – the important thing is to plan early and to do it in the right way.

This briefing sets out the background and current policy on adapting to a changing climate and raises concerns about the development of Scotland's Adaptation Programme.

Adaptation Programme background

Section 53 of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009ⁱ requires Government to lay before the Scottish Parliament a climate Adaptation Programme which must include objectives, policies and proposals. This Programme was preceded by the Government's Adaptation Frameworkⁱⁱ published in 2009, which sets out the existing objectives, timetable and process for helping Scotland adapt to a changing climate. The Framework was developed with 12 accompanying Sector Action Plans.

LINK found the Sector Action Plans as published to be vague, uncoordinated, lacking urgency, and not specifically meeting the challengesⁱⁱⁱ. LINK believes that there is therefore considerable work to be done by the Scottish Government to address the risks and threats presented by climate change. These have now been laid out for us in Defra's UK Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA), which provides a vital link in the development of the Programme.

LINK's work on climate adaptation

LINK has a Climate Adaptation Taskforce working to influence the development of the Adaptation Programme – with a particular concern for biodiversity and the natural environment (which underpins all sectors) but where possible we also work to influence all Sectors.

We have produced a position statement outlining 5 Principles for Adapting to a Changing Climate^{iv} (see box). It includes suggested guidelines for helping the natural environment to adapt and guidelines for ensuring adaptation is sustainable and coordinated across all of the sectors.

We intend to:

- monitor the development of the Programme to ensure that it benefits the environment;
- work with sectors and Government to ensure benefit to the environment;
- judge the Adaptation Programme according to the 5 Principles and the guidelines set out in our position statement; and
- praise or criticise the Scottish Government depending on the content and adequacy of the Programme as they develop it.

*LINK recommends that **five principles** are followed during the development of **Scotland's Adaptation Programme**:*

1. **Develop knowledge** – of climate impacts and the impacts of our adaptation actions – and then make decisions based on it.
2. **Plan strategically** – with a flexible, long-term view and in a joined-up integrated way.
3. **Build resilience** – in the infrastructure, systems and environment we currently have.
4. **Accommodate and enable change** – so people and wildlife can transition and thrive in new ways and in new places in response to climate changes and impacts.
5. **Adapt sustainably** – to avoid maladaptation and detrimental impacts on other elements of the environment.

LINK's Concerns

LINK believes that the Adaptation Programme must:

- have the full commitment of Government, be properly developed and fully funded. Underfunding will stymie the Programme's development and ability to meet the challenges;
- be coordinated and given sufficient priority - it must be more than simply an administrative exercise; and
- take a long-term view, prioritising early effort and preventative spending.

The following questions regarding Programme development remain unanswered:

- How will adaptation principles be directed and coordinated across the different sectors?
- How will draft sector policies and proposals be assessed against adaptation principles?
- Will the Programme be fully funded?
- Will Government act early to adapt to non-immediate risks and thereby reduce later cost?

These questions should be discussed and debated NOW. Waiting for the publication of a full draft of the Programme could mean a missed opportunity for Scotland's future.

RACCE Scrutiny

The Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee (RACCE) is responsible for leading parliamentary post legislative scrutiny of the Climate Change Act. LINK suggests that the RACCE Committee might want to take a lead in:

- seeking answers to the questions above;
- scrutinising Government's development of the draft Programme ahead of the consultation;
- scrutinising the draft Programme during the consultation period; and
- asking Government how the programme will be funded.

This briefing is supported by the following LINK members and members of LINK's Climate Adaptation Task Force:

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| • RSPB Scotland | • Woodland Trust Scotland |
| • Plantlife Scotland | • Soil Association Scotland |
| • Butterfly Conservation Scotland | • Froglife |
| • Scottish Campaign for National Parks | • John Muir Trust |
| • Friends of the Earth Scotland | |

For more information contact: Jim Densham, 0131 317 4157, jim.densham@rspb.org.uk
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ⁱ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2009/12/part/5/chapter/1>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Environment/climatechange/scotlands-action/adaptation/AdaptationFramework>

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.scotlink.org/files/policy/ConsultationResponses/LINKRespAdaptCCFeb11.pdf>

^{iv} http://www.scotlink.org/files/policy/PositionPapers/LINK5_ClimateAdaptPrinciples.pdf

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Registered HQ office: 2 Grosvenor House, Shore Road, Perth PH2 8BD tel 01738 630804 email enquiries@scotlink.org
Parliamentary office: 3rd Floor, Gladstone's Land, 483 Lawnmarket, Edinburgh EH1 2NT tel 0131 225 4345 email parliamentary@scotlink.org