

Scottish Environment

A Scottish Climate Change Adaptation Programme

Summary

LINK recommends that Scottish Climate Change Adaptation Programme (SAP) is developed further and includes:

- A more developed long-term strategic approach to building Scotland's resilience to climate change, including adaptation principles and long-term policies;
- All wider policies which will make Scotland resilient and adaptable to a changing climate in the long-term, i.e. not simply addressing risks in the next 5 years;
- Early action and new projects on the ground within the life of the SAP and a plan to demonstrate them to the public.

Scotland needs to plan now for the consequences and impacts of our changing climate. We are already observing climate change and its impacts. Scotland must reduce GHG emissions but also adapt how we run our economy, our society and how we look after our environment. Adaptation is the term used to describe our responses to a changing climate and its impacts. Adaptation is inevitable – the important thing is to plan early and to do it in the right way.

This briefing sets out LINK's main concerns about the draft Scottish Adaptation Programme (SAP)¹.

LINK's work on climate adaptation

LINK's Climate Adaptation Taskforce has worked for a number of years to influence the development of the SAP – with a particular concern for biodiversity and the natural environment (which underpins all sectors). In 2012, we produced a position statement outlining 5 Principles for Adapting to a Changing Climate² (see box below). It also included suggested guidelines for helping the natural environment to adapt and guidelines for ensuring adaptation is sustainable and coordinated across all sectors. LINK also held a workshop to develop recommendations for the SAP³.

Scottish Adaptation Programme background

Section 53 of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009⁴ requires Government to lay before the Scottish Parliament '*programmes for adaptation to climate change*' which must include objectives, policies and proposals. **The Scottish Government published a draft Scottish Climate Change Adaptation Programme in late June 2013 which presents a Programme of measures for the next 5 years only.**

In developing the SAP the Scottish Government has aimed to address the risks and threats presented in the UK Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA) 2012. The CCRA was useful but limited and not comprehensive, for example, it does not cover sea-level rise or extreme weather events.

¹ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/06/2469>

² http://www.scotlink.org/files/policy/PositionPapers/LINK5_ClimateAdaptPrinciples.pdf

³ <http://www.scotlink.org/files/publication/LINKReports/LINKAdaptWkshopReport12.pdf>

⁴ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2009/12/part/5/chapter/1>

LINK's main points of concern with the draft SAP

- LINK welcomes the draft Scottish Climate Change Adaptation Programme (SAP), its coherent suite of Objectives for the long-term and the efforts taken to include a significant number of policies covering a large range of policy areas.
- LINK is disappointed that the SAP does not outline, more fully, the Scottish Government's strategic direction and approach to ensuring Scotland is resilient and prepared for a changing climate. We believe that should include long-term policies and the principles by which Government and partners will develop measures. Scotland needs to discuss how we will negotiate a path into a new climate, not simply what we will do in the next 5 years. **We ask that the RACCE Committee recommends that the SAP goes beyond the basic requirements for objectives, policies and proposals over the next 5 years based on the CCRA. In addition it must set out a comprehensive and holistic plan to make Scotland a climate ready nation, adapting to a changing climate in a sustainable way and optimising multiple benefits.** To make this happen LINK recommends the inclusion of:
 - Adaptation Principles which will guide adaptation planning and action in Scotland – such as LINK's 5 Principles (see box below);
 - Guidelines to sustainable climate adaptation practice and planning;
 - Long-term cross-cutting policies which have a vision beyond the 5 years of the SAP;
 - A review of risks not identified as a priority within the next 5 years to monitor their status and gather more information.

LINK recommends that five principles are followed during the development of Scotland's Adaptation Programme⁵:

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.

- Whilst LINK welcomes the significant number of policies in the draft SAP, we are disappointed that on the whole there is not a great ambition for solid new adaptation action on the ground. The majority are existing policies and strategies which will themselves benefit the Objectives or have been tweaked to do so. **LINK asks that MSPs question Government on what new adaptation-relevant projects will be seen on the ground in Scotland in the next 5 years.**
- Whilst the SAP does include existing policies to improve the natural environment, we want to see the strategic direction emphasise the need to implement fully all existing environmental legislation. We know that enhancing and protecting the environment is the

⁵ http://www.scotlink.org/files/policy/PositionPapers/LINK5_ClimateAdaptPrinciples.pdf

first step in building the resilience of the natural environment to climate change, in addition to providing the services that nature provides to Scotland's society and economy.

- Furthermore, despite the long list of policies in the SAP, too many are vague, lack sufficient detail, and fail to outline the actions to be taken. This makes it difficult to confidently assess whether the SAP Objectives will be met in the next 5 years. **We recommend that MSPs call for the SAP and its policies and proposals to be developed to show the expected adaptation outcomes of each policy and the timescale by which these will be achieved.**
- The SAP lacks the urgency of action needed to respond to the impacts of climate change being experienced now, especially by the natural environment. LINK recommends that the SAP includes early and real adaptation action on the ground and a plan to demonstrate it to the public so that people can see what adaptation and resilience to climate change involves. **We suggest that RACCE members seek to understand which adaptation actions will be demonstrated on the ground in the next 5 years and what plans are there to systematically learn from these actions.**
- Despite the publication of the draft SAP, climate adaptation remains a low priority within Government. There seems to be no new money for policies or significant new initiatives. **LINK believes that building the resilience of Scotland's environment to climate change should be a priority at a time when our natural resource base needs to be valued as an important asset.**
- LINK welcomes the efforts made to populate the SAP with measures from many Government departments. We recommend that the approach of mainstreaming adaptation across Government is built-on and that climate proofing becomes part of the culture of Government. As a start, we want to see all new and existing policies 'climate-proofed' as they are developed or reviewed. **We suggest that RACCE members ask Government how it will make sustainable climate adaptation planning and action ingrained, commonplace and routine throughout all aspects of its work.**

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

- RSPB Scotland
- Buglife
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- Plantlife Scotland
- Woodland Trust Scotland

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