

The Scottish Climate Change Adaptation Programme

Summary

- LINK welcomes publication of the Scottish Climate Change Adaptation Programme (SAP) and believe it must be used to kick off a much greater profile for climate adaptation and urgent action to respond to the impacts of climate change within Government and across wider society;
- The Programme itself and Government action must be adaptable and respond to the needs at hand and new research as it arises;
- This Programme must be much more than a fixed set of measures which tweak existing Government policies. Rather, it must be just one part of Government's proactive approach on climate impacts.
- Alongside adaptation, Scotland must do more to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions and meet its mitigation targets as set out in the Climate Change (Scotland) Act, thereby reducing climate impacts.

On Thursday 29th May the Minister will make a Statement in Parliament to launch the 1st Scottish Climate Change Adaptation Programme (SAP) - a requirement of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act. Climate change impacts are being felt now in Scotland, particularly in the natural environment. Scotland needs to act urgently to address the consequences and impacts of our changing climate. 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 – including building resilience. Adaptation is inevitable – the important thing is to plan early and to do it in the right way. With the publication of the SAP, it's essential that climate adaptation becomes a higher priority within Government - **building the resilience of Scotland's environment to climate change must be a priority at a time when our natural resource base needs to be valued as an important asset.**

Scottish Adaptation Programme background

The Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009¹ requires Government to lay before the Scottish Parliament '*programmes for adaptation to climate change*'. The Scottish Government has developed measures based on risks identified for Scotland in the UK Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA) 2012. The CCRA is however limited and does not adequately cover some impacts, such as sea-level rise or extreme weather events.

LINK's work on climate adaptation

LINK's Climate Adaptation Taskforce has worked for a number of years to influence the development of the 5 year programme – 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. LINK also provided

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

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

evidence to the RACCE committee about the Draft SAP³ on 30th October.

LINK's main points of concern

LINK welcomes publication of the SAP and efforts to embed adaptation across Government. LINK wants the Scottish Government to ensure the published programme is fully implemented. In addition, we believe Government must also address the following points:

- **Wider action needed:** This Programme should be just one part of Government's proactive approach on climate impacts. It must be much more than an exclusive fixed set of measures which tweak existing Government policies. For example:
 - LINK wants to see Scottish Government fully implement all existing environmental legislation. Improving our environment will increase the resilience of the natural environment, society and economy to climate change impact.
 - LINK believes the SAP's Vision and Principles must be applied to all Government action to ensure all policies and actions are climate-proof.
 - We want to see action on climate following the ecosystem approach of 'working with nature' to ensure appropriate scale of action, a sustainable flow of benefits from ecosystems, such as flood attenuation, and to avoid maladaptation.
- **Flexibility:** The Programme itself must not be set in stone for the next 5 years. The SAP and Government adaptation action must be flexible and respond to the needs at hand and new research as it arises. In addition, we recommend that where necessary measures in the SAP are further developed and detailed as soon as possible.
- **Profile and awareness:** Publication of the SAP must be used as a springboard to greater profile and awareness within Government, and across wider society, for urgent planning and the action needed to respond to the threat of climate change impacts. We believe that demonstration projects and an effective communication strategy are vital to allow wider society to understand the need for effective adaptation and ensure appropriate adaptation action.

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

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- Soil Association Scotland
- Plantlife Scotland
- Butterfly Conservation Scotland
- Scottish Wildlife Trust
- Woodland Trust Scotland

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³ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/06/2469>