

Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Bill: Stage 2 Amendments Briefing

Scottish Environment LINK welcomes the opportunity to share its views regarding the amendments lodged at Stage 2 of the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Bill.

LINK supports robust action to effectively address the climate and nature emergencies. This means robust targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions but also the roll-out of nature-based solutions that will allow us to sequester carbon, as highlighted in the recent UK Committee on Climate Change report.

As such LINK members support the following amendments:

- Setting a net-zero greenhouse gas emissions target by 2045 at the latest (amendment 1).
- Stating the importance of 1.5°C on the face of the Bill (amendments 97, 104, 54)
- Strengthening of Scotland's land use policies (amendment 133)
- Protection and enhancement of Scotland's marine carbon areas (amendment 136)
- Integrating circular economy within the target setting criteria (amendment 107)

Scottish Environment LINK also supports the Stop Climate Chaos Scotland Stage 2 amendments briefing.

LINK particularly encourages MSPs to support the following amendments:

1. NET ZERO TARGET

LINK supports amendment 1 (Roseanna Cunningham) which establishes a net-zero target by 2045 at the latest.

LINK members have previously called for such a target¹ in response to the IPCC's recommendations for limiting all GHG emissions². We welcome the Scottish Government's commitment to respond to the global climate emergency and follow the scientific advice provided by the Committee on Climate Change (CCC). In its advice, the CCC highlighted that Scotland has a 'greater potential for emissions removal'³, given its larger capacity for nature-based carbon sequestration, through land-based sinks. This capacity enables Scotland to reach net-zero GHGs emissions sooner than the rest of the UK. We would note that Scotland's capacity to sequester carbon also includes our seas and marine areas, as mentioned below.

2. 1.5°C

LINK supports amendments 97 (Angus MacDonald), 104 (Maurice Golden), and 54 (Roseanna Cunningham), all of which state the importance of 1.5°C on the face of the Bill.

¹ IPCC (2018) Special Report: Global Warming of 1.5°C <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>

² <http://www.scotlink.org/wp/files/documents/LINK-Climate-Change-Bill-Stage1-Debate-Briefing.pdf>

³ Committee on Climate Change (2019): Net Zero: The UK's contribution to stopping global warming

This highlights the importance of ensuring warming does not exceed 1.5°C in line with international evidence. But it is of particular relevance to our natural environment where an ‘overshoot’ scenario which would see temperatures exceed 1.5°C and then fall, would create irreversible damage to biodiversity⁴.

The IPCC¹ has noted that the climate change risks to our ecosystems, habitats and species arising from 1.5°C or 2°C warming scenarios will differ substantially. Even a 1.5°C average temperature rise may put 20-30% of species at risk of extinction, and if the warming goes beyond 2°C nearly all ecosystems will struggle and damage could be irreparable. The joint LINK-WWF Scotland Nature on Red Alert report⁵ illustrates how many of Scotland’s species and habitats will be affected even under 1.5°C change and the further risks than an increase to 2°C creates.

3. A STRONGER LAND USE STRATEGY

LINK supports amendment 133 (Claudia Beamish) on the creation of regional land use partnerships and frameworks.

The CCC identified³ land use as a key area for achieving the net-zero emissions target, where ‘essential deep emissions reduction and adapting to the impact of a changing climate’ should be at the heart of reforms. However, as the Committee noted in both its Stage 1 and Stage 2 reports concerns ‘that the potential benefits of the Land Use Strategy have not been fully realised’ remain. The Committee noted that it ‘supports a more coordinated approach to land use in Scotland’. Amendment 133 speaks to these issues.

LINK members strongly support the strengthening of the legislative basis of the Land Use Strategy⁶. If properly implemented and resourced, the Land Use Strategy can provide a framework for the strategic and integrated use of land. To achieve this, the Land Use Strategy must be accompanied by a clear action plan with timeframes for implementing actions.

The amendment provides for this by requiring the deployment of regional land use plans and partnerships which are key mechanisms for guiding how land should be used at the local level, all of which is essential for the optimal reduction of GHG in Scotland. The creation of regional land use plans and partnerships is already required under the Land Use Strategy though progress has stalled.

Regional land use plans and partnerships are also critical to realising an existing Scottish Government priority under Scotland’s 2020 Biodiversity Route Map⁷: the introduction of a national ecological network (NEN). The NEN would allow for the identification and prioritisation of habitats and facilitate coordinated action for the restoration of nature. This is critical if Scotland is to harness the potential of nature-based solutions for tackling climate change. LINK members hope that this issue can be discussed at Stage 2 given the links with the Land Use Strategy but also brought forward at Stage 3.

4. CLIMATE AND RURAL POLICIES

Linked to the need for strengthening the Land Use Strategy is the need to support the positive contribution farming and agriculture can make in terms of tackling climate change. LINK notes that the CCC recommends stronger policy levers to reduce emissions in the agricultural sector, which should go beyond the current voluntary approach.

In responding to the climate emergency, it is important to ensure that financial support and policies for our rural areas also contribute to reducing greenhouse emissions. An amendment seeking to link any future rural subsidy

⁴ Differential climate impacts for policy-relevant limits to global warming: the case of 1.5 °C and 2 °C <https://www.earth-syst-dynam.net/7/327/2016/>

⁵ http://www.scotlink.org/wp/files/documents/Scotlands_Nature_Red_Alert.pdf

⁶ Scottish Environment LINK Stage 1 Evidence: <http://www.scotlink.org/wp/files/documents/Scottish-Environment-LINK-ECCLR-Stage-1-Evidence-Climate-Bill-Aug2018.pdf>

⁷ Scotland’s Biodiversity a Route Map to 2020 <https://www2.gov.scot/Resource/0048/00480289.pdf>

system to climate change would have been helpful. In this respect, LINK members support the intention of amendment 49 by Mark Ruskell and amendment 101 from John Scott to ensure that individual climate-friendly farmers receive credit for all the activities that they are doing on a farm to tackle climate change.

Alongside SCCS, LINK has supported the creation of a Nitrogen Balance Sheet for Scotland which would provide the basis for charting progress in the more efficient use of nitrogen across the economy.

LINK hopes that amendments on a Nitrogen Balance Sheet and on linking climate change to agricultural subsidies will be brought at Stage 3.

5. BLUE CARBON

LINK strongly supports amendment 136 (Mark Ruskell) for the protection and enhancement of blue carbon stores.

Scotland's marine carbon stores have the potential to store an estimated 7.2 Mt organic carbon and 0.44 Mt inorganic carbon per year in Scotland's marine sediments, which is equivalent to 28.2 Mt carbon emissions annually (equivalent to 52% of 2011 CO₂ emissions in Scotland)⁸. The current Climate Change Plan acknowledges the importance of blue carbon and outlines the research taking place to evidence its potential. However, given the climate emergency, it is important to already take action and outline policies for protecting and enhancing our natural blue carbon stores.

Based on existing research and evidence, policies should be already rolled out to better protect and enhance blue carbon habitats and therefore provide a significant contribution towards capturing greenhouse gas emissions.

6. CIRCULAR ECONOMY

LINK supports amendment 107 (Maurice Golden), which would add the circular economy within the target setting criteria.

Our climate and ecological emergencies are driven in part by what and how much we consume and what we throw away. It is therefore important to ensure that our approach to climate change takes into account the need to reduce and design out waste in line with the principles of a circular economy. This is also important from a biodiversity point of view as 80% of biodiversity loss is caused by resource extraction and processing⁹. The Scottish Government has stated that a more circular economy could reduce carbon emissions by 11 million tonnes per year by 2050¹⁰.

For more information please contact Daphne Vlastari, LINK Advocacy Manager (daphne@scotlink.org, 0131 225 4345)

⁸ Burrows M.T., *et al* (2014): Assessment of carbon budgets and potential blue carbon stores in Scotland's coastal and marine environment. Scottish Natural Heritage Commissioned Report No. 761.

⁹ <http://www.scotlink.org/wp/files/documents/CE-Bill-call-for-June-19-with-layout2-003-1.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/making-things-last-circular-economy-strategy-scotland/>