

Written Evidence to the Environment and Rural Development Committee Inquiry on Climate Change

LINK Climate Change Action Plan

Scottish Environment LINK member bodies (listed below) believe that Scotland needs urgent action on climate change and highlight the following 10-points:

1. Climate Change is happening already, it will get worse and **urgent action** is needed now to prevent the worst consequences.
2. Scotland needs Scottish greenhouse gas **reduction targets** and **a realistic programme** to achieve them.
3. Scotland's rural, urban, coastal and marine areas are going to continue to be **seriously affected** by climate change. We must accept this, mitigating effects where possible and coming up with strategies which help us adapt where not.
4. As part of a **Scottish Energy Strategy**, the Scottish Executive should take an **active role** in promoting a diverse base of renewable energy schemes.
5. **Transport emissions** are significant and growing; an effective integrated transport policy is required to curb these emissions.
6. Alongside increasing production from clean energy sources, Scotland needs to **reduce consumption** and must implement **energy efficiency targets** for domestic, commercial and industrial buildings.
7. Scotland must **safeguard its carbon reservoirs**, particularly peatlands.
8. Individuals can **make a difference**, but people need to understand the consequences of the choices they make about where they live, how they travel, what they buy etc.
9. Scotland must play its part in **international climate negotiations**.
10. Only with **sustainable development** addressing the environment, social issues and the economy together, can we really tackle climate change.

LINK member bodies are keen to contribute to taking these actions in Scotland.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change is the most serious environmental problem facing the globe. In Scotland it will mean more unpredictable weather, more storms and rising seas,

leading to floods, drought, failed harvests, the spread of disease and whole species being wiped out.

The UK signed up to climate targets at the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992 and further targets at Kyoto in 1997. The Scottish Executive has pledged that we will 'play our part' and 'make an equitable contribution' to meeting these targets but the Scottish Climate Change Programme did not set any specific targets for Scotland and specifies little actual action.

In Scotland we are already falling behind in tackling climate change. Recent Government figures reveal that Scotland's emissions of CO₂ fell 5.6% between 1990 and 2002, while overall UK reduction was 15%.

Taking action on climate change will have extra benefits - as well as avoiding the worst damage from the changing weather and addressing problems already being faced in farming and fisheries, Scotland will create jobs, and reduce air pollution and related health problems.

In more detail:

Climate Change is happening already, it will get worse and urgent action is needed now to prevent the worst consequences.

From the weather disasters around the world to breeding times of birds, there is no question that things are changing, with 7 of the 10 hottest years since 1961 occurring in the last decade. The more we do today to reduce emissions the less damage will happen in the future and the cheaper it will be to cope with change.

Scotland needs Scottish greenhouse gas targets and a realistic programme to achieve them.

Clear national and sectoral targets are needed so that everyone - business people, farmers, the public, councils - know what is expected of them and how they can do their bit to meet international targets. In the light of recent performance we think that Scotland should aim for a 20% reduction in CO₂ emissions on 1990 levels by 2010. We further support the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution's call for a cut of 60% by 2050.

Scotland's rural, urban, marine and coastal areas are going to be affected by climate change. We must accept this, mitigating effects where possible and coming up with strategies which help us adapt where not.

From coping with flooding to realigning the coast and from changing farming to retraining doctors, we need to prepare today for the changes which will happen in the coming decades. Where possible, measures must be implemented that mitigate for adverse effects, such as the loss of important species, habitats and archaeological sites. We need to turn problems into opportunities where we can but also recognise that there will be real costs to pay.

The Scottish Executive should take a more active role in promoting a wide range of renewable energy schemes.

Renewable energy sources, like energy from the wind, waves, sun and specially grown 'energy crops,' are essential if we are to use less fossil fuels and phase out nuclear power. Investment in renewables is investment in clean energy, jobs in Scotland and new manufacturing industries. We think a challenging but achievable target for Scotland would be 25% of Scottish electricity to come from renewables by 2010 and 50% by 2025. There should be significantly improved planning and funding within the framework of a national energy strategy. Incinerating municipal waste does not produce renewable energy and should not be included as a renewable.

Transport emissions are significant and growing; an effective integrated transport policy is required to curb these emissions.

Transport, mainly road transport, was responsible for 14% of climate change emissions in 2002, and is the fastest growing sector of emissions. Road traffic is the second fastest growing source of greenhouse gas emissions with aviation the fastest. UK policy aims to cut transport emissions by 17% by 2010, half that reduction coming from measures like charges to come into cities and parking charges at work. Current action is not sufficient to produce the reductions needed. All transport policies and projects should be assessed against their climate change impact.

Scotland needs energy efficiency targets for domestic, commercial and industrial buildings.

Every year thousands of Scots die from conditions related to cold, damp housing. Solving this national disgrace should be an urgent priority and doing it right will also reduce the 22% of CO₂ emissions which come from people's homes. Between 1990 and 2002 CO₂ emissions from the Commercial sector rose by 35%, mainly because of increasing energy use within buildings.

Scotland must safeguard its carbon reservoirs, particularly peatlands.

Scotland's soils lock up a huge amount of carbon, far more than all the trees and shrubs in the UK put together, so it is vital to make sure these carbon 'sinks' are protected through appropriate agricultural policies, an end to large-scale peat extraction and an urgent programme of peatland restoration. These policies would also conserve biodiversity and archaeological value of peat bogs.

Individuals can make a difference, but people need to understand the consequences of the choices they make about where they live, how they travel, what they buy etc.

We can all help to reduce climate change emissions at work, at home, in school etc by making the right choices. The Government should help people to do this through good planning advice, integrated transport and public information campaigns.

Scotland must play its part in international climate negotiations.

Scotland is part of the UK delegation to UN meetings on climate change. It is vital that Scottish interests are properly represented and that Scotland makes a full

contribution to meeting UK targets. Scotland should help to ensure that international rules force most savings to be made 'at home', and that nuclear power and destructive forestry projects are not supported.

Sustainable development means considering the environment, social issues and the economy together. Only by doing this can we really tackle climate change.

Climate change needs to be a major consideration in all areas of Government decision making and processes. Education for sustainable development is a key part of changing the way we look at problems and make decisions. The mitigation and adaptation response to climate change should also be sustainable.

Scottish Environment LINK member bodies have called on the Scottish Executive to develop, implement and resource a detailed Scottish Strategy on Climate Change which addresses these points and brings together social, environmental and economic interests to reduce emissions and improve quality of life.

Notes

Scottish Environment LINK is the liaison body for Scotland's voluntary sector environmental organisations. LINK was established in 1987 to provide a forum and network for the voluntary environmental sector to assist in co-operation and communication with government bodies and other bodies with a role in Scotland's environment. There are currently 36 member bodies in LINK, representing around half a million people.

This statement is supported by the following LINK bodies :

ruralScotland	Plantlife Scotland
Association of Regional and Island Archaeologists	Ramblers' Association Scotland
Badenoch and Strathspey Conservation Group	Reforestation Scotland
Biological Recording in Scotland Campaign	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds Scotland
Butterfly Conservation	Saltire Society
BTCV Scotland	Scottish Council for National Parks
Cairngorms Campaign	Scottish Native Woods
Council for Scottish Archaeology	Scottish Wild Land Group
Friends of the Earth Scotland	Scottish Wildlife Trust
Friends of Loch Lomond	Sustrans Scotland
Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust	
John Muir Trust	
Marine Conservation Society	
North East Mountain Trust	

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