

## Briefing: Executive Climate Change Action Plan Debate

**Scottish Environment LINK welcomes the setting of a Scottish Target for reducing carbon emissions and the commitment to report annually to the Parliament on progress. In order to ensure the effective implementation of the Climate Change Programme, LINK would also like to see:**

- Annual targets and annual reports on progress towards current targets on greenhouse gas emissions, energy efficiency and % of electricity from renewables.
- Clear sectoral targets for reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and energy conservation/efficiency
- Continued commitment to achieving the target to stabilise road traffic levels at 2001 by 2011, and annual targets and an action plan to achieve this

**Global warming 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 seven of the 10 hottest years since 1961 occurring in the last decade. Climate change is a greater threat to future generations than terrorism, it threatens food security and will exacerbate the already difficult freshwater position in the world. Real changes to our lifestyle are essential in order to avoid catastrophe. 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. 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.

### **Energy: Clear national and sectoral targets monitored annually**

LINK welcomes the Scottish target to reduce carbon emissions and the obligation to report annually to parliament. We would also like to see targets to achieve 3% year on year reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and a 2.4% increase in energy efficiency, with regular reports on progress to Parliament. Clear sectoral targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and energy efficiency are needed so that everyone – businesses small and large, the public, farmers, local councils - can see what is expected of them and what needs done to meet international targets. Between 1990 and 2002, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from the Commercial sector rose by 35%, mainly because of increasing energy use within buildings. The priority should be for demand-reduction, with the carrot of investment and incentive packages, and the stick of regulatory and financial measures.

The Scottish Executive should promote a wide range of renewable energy schemes within a Scottish Energy Strategy. The Executive should consult on and prepare a **Scottish Energy Strategy** to co-ordinate and drive forward action on demand reduction

and energy efficiency; to maximise the opportunities for renewable energy and to prevent ad hoc development in areas that require protection.

There should be significantly improved planning and funding within the framework of a national energy strategy to support all renewables, with increased effort on small scale and micro renewables and those which produce heat, including Combined Heat and Power schemes. Nuclear power is expensive and dangerous, and there is no need for new reactors in Scotland's future energy provision.

Scottish Ministers have emphasised that the Executive's objective is to deliver renewables without environmental harm. To achieve this will require a strategic approach, including a national, locational framework and more effective national planning guidance to help plan renewables and associated electricity grid improvements.

### **Transport**

Our current patterns of transport are widely recognised as unsustainable. Both road and air transport continue to grow, with 18% more traffic on Scotland's roads and 90% more air passengers in 2003 than in 1993. Carbon dioxide emissions from transport represent 23% of the UK's total domestic emissions, and rose by 8% between 1990 and 2003. Encouraging sustainable transport is about more than exhortations to individuals to make more sustainable and healthier choices. What is required is a shift in policies and funding priorities at both national and local levels. We must change the way we design our communities so that a car is not required for everyday trips to work, school, or to shops.

LINK does not believe carbon emissions reductions have been taken seriously enough in the recently published National Transport Strategy. We are particularly concerned at the suggestion that the road traffic stabilisation target set in 2002 might be dropped. Transport is a key sector where emissions reductions are essential. LINK calls for interim targets and an action plan to achieve the existing Executive commitment to stabilise road traffic levels at 2001 levels by 2021. A transport policy that focuses on promoting healthy and active travel modes, in particular cycling and walking, will help to avert the obesity time bomb, and will benefit taxpayers by reducing costs on the NHS. Currently, public spending on cycling and walking across Scottish local authorities amounting to around £8 million per annum – less than 1% of the Executive's total annual transport spending.

### **Adapting to climate change**

Scotland's rural, urban, marine and coastal habitats are going to be affected by climate change. We need strategies and investment to reduce the impact on Scotland's biodiversity and allow species and habitats to adapt, where necessary. It is essential that we conserve important natural carbon stores such as peatlands and avoid damage to these habitats. Solutions to future flooding problems should be based on sustainable flood management approaches which conserve and enhance natural habitats.

For further information on this subject contact:  
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