

Briefing paper from the Scottish Environment LINK Climate Task Force for the Scottish Government Debate on Climate Change, Wednesday 28th May

LINK is

Established in 1987, Scottish Environment LINK is the forum for Scotland's voluntary environment organisations - 32 member bodies representing a broad spectrum of environmental interests with the common goal of contributing to a more environmentally sustainable society.

LINK and Stop Climate Chaos Scotland

Scottish Environment LINK works closely with the campaigning coalition Stop Climate Chaos Scotland. The Stop Climate Chaos Scotland coalition is part of the growing UK-wide coalition, which involves most of the UK's leading environmental and international development organisations as well as women's organisations, activist groups and faith based campaigns.

Scotland has the opportunity to lead the way in tackling climate change, the Climate Change (Scotland) Bill is the focus of international attention. If the Bill is to provide the necessary strong framework to deliver a fair contribution to global efforts to prevent dangerous climate change it must:

1. Include a target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 80% by 2050.

The Bill should require Government to keep within a fair share of global greenhouse gas emissions, at a level that restricts temperature rise to no more than 2°C. On current science, to stand even a 50% chance of doing this, we must set an overarching target to reduce greenhouse gases by at least 80% by 2050, based on 1990 levels.

2. Include statutory targets of at least 3% year on year emission reductions.

As an absolute minimum, year on year cuts of at least 3% will be required to ensure that overall targets are met. Lower rates of annual progress will mean a higher level of cumulative emissions.

3. Include emissions from international aviation and shipping in its reduction targets.

Aviation and shipping contribute significantly to greenhouse gas emissions and without significant reductions from these sectors, meeting proposed emission reduction targets will be impossible.

If citizens of Scotland fly, either domestically or internationally, then Scotland should be held accountable for the carbon cost of those flights. It is essential that greenhouse gas emissions from aviation and shipping are included in any targets for reduction.

Protecting the Natural Environment

Scottish Environment LINK's broad spectrum of organisations recognise the impact that climate change will have on the diverse range of interests that they represent and support a strong Climate Change Bill that will work towards ensuring not only that significant reductions in emissions are achieved, but that these reductions are made sustainably and avoid any damage to Scotland's exceptional natural environment.

Recognising that climate change is already happening, we also want to see effective measures to help increase the resilience of our natural environment to these changes.

Action on climate change for both mitigation and adaptation should be taken in a sustainable manner that conserves and enhances the natural environment. A joined up response that considers the environment, social issues and the economy is the only effective way to tackle climate change.

A sustainable approach will also avoid conflict when considering the most appropriate ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions or adapt to climate change.

We and future generations depend on a healthy environment: there is no point in seeking opportunistic ways to address climate change which threaten biodiversity, landscapes or our cultural heritage. In fact, our natural environment, if managed sustainably, can often help in cutting emissions and providing the means to deal with a changing climate.

Mitigation

A Scottish Climate Change bill should provide a framework to guarantee significant improvements in energy efficiency, support for demand management and ensure the delivery of the renewable electricity targets.

- In many cases delivery of biodiversity objectives and better management of ecosystems can contribute to greenhouse gas reductions and assist with adaptation **For example** - peatland restoration or native woodland creation can reduce greenhouse gases; natural flood management or creation of integrated habitat networks can assist with adaptation

Adaptation

The world is already committed to a certain amount of climate change as a result of historical emissions, and we have an ever increasing body of evidence about the likely impacts of this on the natural environment and on the world's poorest people.

Without cutting our greenhouse gas emissions we risk a global temperature rise of more than 2 degrees C, which could bring catastrophic environmental damage. Even if we can limit climate change, we still must set about the serious task of dealing with the more manageable consequences through adaptation.

- Scotland's environment is going to be affected by climate change; where possible these effects must be minimised and strategies sought which help us adapt.
For example - we must safeguard our carbon reservoirs, particularly peatlands, through improved protection and management of the land.
- In order to tackle the impacts of climate change, action must be taken at all levels in the planning system to provide both a strategic steer and tangible solutions to climate change adaptation.
For example - creating healthy and connected ecological networks that will allow species and habitats to adapt or migrate.

An adaptive strategy for biodiversity is needed to protect, restore, expand and link together semi-natural habitats and make the wider countryside more wildlife friendly. Planning for development, agriculture and forestry practices must work with biodiversity conservation to provide a landscape that is permeable to species movement. We need an integrated approach to land and sea use, to avoid losing Scotland's characteristic species and habitats to climate change.

For more information please contact –

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