

Ten Principles for tackling climate change sustainably

Scottish Environment LINK believes that Scotland needs urgent action on climate change and highlights 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 year-on-year progress in all sectors towards these targets.
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. Scotland needs to **reduce energy consumption** and must implement **energy efficiency targets** for domestic, commercial and industrial buildings, land use and food production.
7. Scotland must **safeguard its carbon reservoirs**, particularly peatlands.
8. The Government needs to **help people understand** the consequences of the choices they make (about where they live, how they travel, what they buy etc.) and to enable them to make climate-friendly choices.
9. Scottish decision makers must play a part in **international climate negotiations**, pressing the UK, Europe and UN for action.
10. Only with **sustainable development** addressing the environment, social issues and the economy together, can we really tackle climate change.

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.

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 seven 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. 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.

Scotland needs greenhouse gas targets and year-on-year progress towards these targets.

Clear national and sectoral targets 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. We think that Scotland should aim for an 80% cut in CO2 by 2050. Scotland needs to make year-on-year progress in all sectors towards these targets, with regular reports on progress to Parliament.

Scotland's rural, urban, marine and coastal habitats are going to be affected by climate change. We need strategies to reduce the impact on Scotland's biodiversity and allow species and habitats to adapt, where necessary.

From coping with flooding to realigning coasts and from changing our farming practices to integrating planning with biodiversity conservation, we need to prepare today for the changes that will happen in the coming decades. Species and habitats important to Scotland are vulnerable to climate change because many are in a damaged condition and exist in a fragmented landscape, threatening their continued survival and depriving them of the ability to shift to climates that are more suitable. Measures must be implemented to prevent the loss of archaeological sites, species and habitats, and help them cope with new climate regimes. Where species and habitats will have to adapt or move we must assist this process. An adaptive strategy for biodiversity would 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

The Scottish Executive should promote a wide range of renewable energy schemes within a Scottish Energy Strategy (see LINK's Energy Statement).

Renewable energy sources, like the wind, waves, sun and specially grown 'energy crops,' are essential in reducing emissions. There should be significantly improved planning and funding within the framework of a national energy strategy to support all renewables, including those which produce heat, boost Combined Heat and Power schemes and work to phase out fossil fuels and nuclear power. Nuclear power is expensive and dangerous, and new reactors have no place in Scotland's future energy provision. Investment in research, development and deployment of renewables is investment in clean energy, jobs in Scotland and new manufacturing industries. A challenging but achievable target for Scotland would be at least 50% of our electricity to come from renewables by 2020.

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

Road transport emissions in 2004 accounted for 22.8% of Scotland's total carbon dioxide emissions and emissions from this sector have risen by 8.3% in 2004 since 1990. Aviation is the fastest growing source of transport emissions. UK policy aims to cut transport emissions by 17% by 2010, half that reduction coming from measures like congestion charges and parking charges at work. More needs to be done to ensure that all transport proposals and policies contribute to reducing emissions, including an end to major, traffic-generating road schemes and measures to stabilise the growth in air travel.

Scotland needs energy efficiency targets for domestic, commercial and industrial buildings, land use and food production.

Every year thousands of Scots die from conditions related to cold, damp housing. Solving this national disgrace is now a priority for Scotland and doing it right will reduce the 25% 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. Energy use in the production of fertilizers, management of soil for agriculture and food production and procurement requires urgent review. The Scottish Energy Efficiency Strategy should give priority to demand-reduction, with the carrot of investment and incentive packages, and the stick of regulatory and financial measures.

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. It is vital that these carbon 'stores' are protected through appropriate forestry, agricultural and development planning policies, an end to commercial peat mining and an urgent programme of peatland restoration. This would also help conserve their biodiversity and archaeological value.

The Government should help people understand the consequences of the choices they make and enable them to make climate-friendly choices.

The Government, industry and citizens all need to do their bit to tackle climate emissions. We can all help reduce climate change emissions at work, at home, in school, etc, by making the right choices. Government should help us to do this by making the right choice the easy choice. This means investing in integrated transport, public information campaigns and leading the way, for example by ensuring all public buildings meet tough efficiency standards and make use of renewables and/or CHP. Industry, business and commerce must also be given greater incentive to lead by example.

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. This is the only way to really tackle climate change.

Climate change should be a major consideration in all areas of Government decision making. At present, competing priorities prevent a proper, joined-up response to climate change. The key example is the drive for economic growth. If the quality of the economy, rather than simply its size, were measured, it would be clear that climate change should be a major factor in economic and business planning. Education for sustainable development is a key part of changing the way we look at problems and make decisions. The emissions reduction and adaptation responses to climate change should also be based on sustainability principles.

Signatories to Ten Principles in Tackling Climate Change

Badenoch and Strathspey Conservation Group
Butterfly Conservation Scotland
Cairngorms Campaign
Council for Scottish Archaeology
Friends of the Earth Scotland
Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust
Marine Conservation Society Scotland
National Trust for Scotland
North East Mountain Trust
Plantlife Scotland
Ramblers' Association Scotland
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
Royal Zoological Society of Scotland
rural Scotland
Scottish Council for National Parks
Scottish Native Woods
Scottish Wildlife Trust
Soil Association Scotland
Sustrans Scotland
Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society
Woodland Trust Scotland
WWF Scotland

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 34 member bodies in LINK, representing almost half a million people.

LINK is a Scottish Charity (SCN 000296) and a Scottish Company limited by guarantee (SCN250899).

Further information

Clifton Bain, Climate Task Force Convenor, tel 0131 311 6511
Jane Herbstritt, LINK Parliamentary Officer, tel 0131 225 4345
Jen Anderson, LINK Chief Officer, tel 01738 630804