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PARLIAMENTARY BRIEFING

Budget (Scotland) Bill 2013-14

January 2013

Summary

- WWF is concerned that this Budget is at odds with the Government's strategic ambitions on climate change, and further compounds previous underinvestment in low carbon homes and transport.
- We therefore reiterate the concerns made by some committees about insufficient levels of funding for active travel and home energy efficiency.
- A low carbon budget should be seen as an investment in the wellbeing of our country, supporting green jobs, warmer homes, cleaner energy, active travel and more efficient public transport.
- MSPs should pass a Budget Bill that reflects the ambition they sought when passing the Climate Change Act through Parliament. We are calling on Government to re-prioritise its spending to adequately reflect its climate ambition by:
 - doubling the funding for the National Retrofit Programme
 - increasing the 'active travel' proportion of the transport budget towards 10%

In its report, the EET committee rightly asserts that 'it is important that the budget gives confidence that the climate change targets will be met'. Indeed, the RACCE committee last year urged Government to 'ensure all proposals and policies in the RPP [Report on Proposals and Policies] are fully funded, in order to meet the targets set out in the Climate Change (Scotland) Act.' Despite this call, the Government has presented a budget that WWF believes undermines the credibility of its own climate change action plan. Earlier this year the Scottish Government missed its first annual emissions reduction target for 2010, with emissions from housing and transport higher now than they were in 1990. We hope that with the introduction of a new climate action plan – RPP2 - will be an opportunity to bring forward the 'step change' needed in climate policies.



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A budget at odds with climate ambition

WWF Scotland is aware of the pressures on public finances and that this results in tough decisions having to be made. For example, plans to fund the building of new roads such as the AWPR and Forth Road Crossing, alongside future commitments such as A9 dualling will take up a considerable proportion of present and future budgets, yet do not align with our climate ambitions. WWF believes that scope does exist to prioritise differently to help us cut our climate emissions but also to help achieve wider win-win health and economy benefits for Scotland as a result.

Homes: Recent analysis for WWF Scotland reveals the scale of the gap between the total investment required to reach the government's target for emissions reductions from housing would require a total investment (public and private) of £4.6bn. The Draft Budget for 2013-14 proposes only £65m for a National Retrofit Programme for energy efficiency and fuel poverty. We recognise that government cannot be expected to plug the entire funding gap, however, to lever in the necessary private investment, we believe spending on the National Retrofit Programme funding must be at least doubled to £130m. WWF is therefore concerned to note the division within the EET committee, resulting in it being unable to agree collectively on support for the proposal to raise fuel poverty funding from £65m to 'no less than £100m'.

Transport: The transport budget again remains heavily dominated by spending on motorways and trunk roads with less than 2% of the transport budget allocated to walking and cycling. The ICI committee rightly noted that it 'remains convinced that the level of public investment in active travel is insufficient to meet the ambitious long term objectives it needs to deliver' and that 'even relatively minor adjustments could bring disproportionately larger economic and societal benefits.' We welcome the additional £3.9m towards active travel infrastructure, a recognition that this type of investment is needed and valued. We therefore urge the Government to continue to work towards a step change in the funding of active travel, towards a goal of dedicating 10% of the transport budget to active travel.

New 'low carbon' opportunities

It is disappointing once again that the Finance committee has not taken forward concerns by ICI and EET committees about insufficient levels of funding for active travel and home energy efficiency, and has relegated climate change to 'other issues' within its report. This is despite the fact that one of the Budget's fundamental priorities is to secure 'new opportunities through the low carbon economy'. A low carbon budget should be seen as an investment in the wellbeing of our country, supporting green jobs, warmer homes, cleaner energy, active travel and more efficient public transport.

WWF Scotland urges MSPs to urge the Government to better align the Budget so that it reflects Scotland's commitment to secure a low carbon future. Scotland can not pass up the opportunities presented by a move to a low carbon economy.

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