

Parliamentary Briefing: Climate Change May 2008

WWF Scotland welcomes this debate on Climate Change. It comes at a critical time, as the Scottish Government considers the vast number of responses to the Climate Change Bill consultation and the Parliament prepares to consider what could be its most significant piece of legislation this generation.

The urgency

It is clear that the next five years present Scotland, and the world, with a closing window of opportunity in which to prevent dangerous climate change from becoming a devastating reality. For people and nature in some parts of the world, it is already and if we do nothing it will be worse. In light of this urgency, WWF welcomed the SNP manifesto commitment to bring forward a Climate Change (Scotland) Bill as a priority:

'In government we will introduce a Climate Change Bill with mandatory carbon reduction targets of 3% per annum and also set a long-term target of cutting emissions by a minimum of 80% by 2050 – above the UK target of 60%.'

SNP Manifesto 2007, Page 29

People across Scotland and around the world are looking to the Climate Change (Scotland) Bill to address the urgent need for action on climate change and lead internationally, by providing a strong framework to ensure we make a fair contribution to global efforts to tackle climate change.

Almost **20,000 people** from **across Scotland** (6,851) and **146 countries** (12,930) responded to the consultation on Scotland's Climate Change Bill, backing WWF Scotland calls for the Bill to:

- 1. Require reduction of greenhouse gas emissions of at least 80% by 2050**
- 2. Include annual statutory targets of at least 3% year on year emission reductions**
- 3. Include emissions from international aviation and shipping in the reduction targets.**

WWF Scotland is a member of the Stop Climate Chaos Coalition Scotland alongside environment, development, community, faith and trade union groups who are also campaigning on these key issues.

The vision

The Climate Change (Scotland) Bill presents Scotland with the opportunity to offer real global leadership and set a benchmark for emissions reduction which are in line with the minimum reductions internationally accepted as being required globally if we are to avoid the worst of dangerous climate change.

By setting out a clear statutory framework for action with the right targets in view, this legislation could mark a significant milestone on our path to a low carbon future. It could ensure Scotland is well positioned to reap the rewards of being at the forefront of a new low carbon global economy.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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Why is at least an 80% green house gas emission reduction by 2050 target needed?

In order to avoid the worst impacts of climate change it will be necessary to stabilise global greenhouse gas emissions at below 450ppm¹ (CO₂ equivalent) and probably nearer 400ppm.² Globally this means an emission cut of 50% from 1990 baselines and for industrialised countries like Scotland at least an 80% cut in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050³. An 80% reduction in emissions is important to stand even a 50% chance of staying below a 2°C warming above pre-industrial levels.

The International Panel on Climate Change has concluded that at warming of just over 2°C over pre-industrial levels, some 20-30% of species face a high risk of extinction. If the rise in temperature ranges between 2-3°C, an additional 1-2 billion people will face increased water scarcity and many millions face increased hunger, displacement by sea level rise and extreme weather events. Moreover above 2°C we face severe risks of crossing severe tipping points and triggering feedbacks that will accelerate climate change, such as the collapse of the Greenland ice sheet and die back of the Amazon rainforest.

"Even though they have not been responsible for most of the pollution, many African countries are already suffering the impacts of climate change. This year they are also suffering from food shortages. If Scotland can help encourage other rich countries to cut their pollution then that is a good thing."

Gacheke Gachihi, Nairobi, Kenya's Peoples' Parliament

Why must statutory annual targets be established for at least 3% year on year emissions?

Annual targets of at least 3% emission reductions are critical to set the necessary downward trajectory that will ensure an 80% emission reduction target is reached by 2050. Any less would not achieve the emission reduction required from the 1990 base line. 3% reductions should be the absolute minimum that Scotland should aspire to achieve annually and therefore should be established as the baseline in statute.

"It is about time that the countries in the north - who are responsible for pollution - to take steps to tackle climate change because developing countries, which contributed nothing to global warming, are already suffering its impacts. I believe it is right that a country like Scotland does everything it can to help remedy the global injustice of climate change." Mercedes Camps, Montevideo, Uruguay

Why must the reduction targets include the emissions from aviation and shipping?

All emissions must be accounted for in the targets set out in the Bill. The exclusion of the emissions from international aviation and shipping would mean a significant and growing percentage of emissions going uncounted. Scotland has some critical levers including planning powers and investment decisions that can influence emissions from aviation and shipping.

"For the sake of everyone around the world, it is vital that emissions of greenhouse gases are drastically reduced. If Scotland is really prepared to show a lead that other rich countries could follow then it deserves to be supported." Nassar Ibrahim, Bethlehem, Palestine

WWF urges the Scottish Parliament to push the Scottish Government to bring forward strong legislation, in line with their manifesto commitment, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions as a priority.

Tackling Climate Change. As a nation Scotland could lead the way.

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¹ Parts per million in the atmosphere

² Meinhausen 2006, see also the Stern Review and IPCC Summary for Policy Makers 2007

³ International Panel on Climate Change Reports 2007