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PARLIAMENTARY BRIEFING

Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee briefing

June 2011

Background

The new Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee will have a broad range of issues to grapple with for the new session. WWF Scotland would like to take the opportunity to brief new members ahead of the new session on some key issues for WWF. We look forward to engaging with new Committee members and staff over the course of the next Parliament.

The major change to the Committee of course is the addition of climate change to its remit. Climate change is a wide-ranging issue that affects the work of many other committees, so we encourage the RACCE Committee to liaise closely with other committees such as the ICI Committee (for housing and transport), the EET Committee (for energy and economy), the Finance Committee and others.

Climate Change

Scotland has been hailed across the world for its ambitious climate change plans. Having passed the Climate Change Act in 2009, we now call on the Parliament, and particularly the RACCE Committee to hold the Government to account on its implementation in order to deliver a truly low-carbon, safer, cleaner, healthier future. Annual emissions reductions targets have to be met through the implementation of the Government's Report on Proposals and Policies (RPP). The RPP for 2010 - 2022, published in January 2011, shows that emissions reductions from current policies only add up to meet 3 out of the next 12 annual targets (2013, 2019 and 2020). More policy effort must be achieved in order to give the confidence that these targets will be met. WWF asks that the Committee holds the Government to account on the full implementation of the RPP along with a sufficient level of budgetary funding to ensure that all proposals in the document are translated into funded policies.

As the weakest areas of the RPP are in the transport and housing sectors, WWF urges the RACCE Committee to work closely with both the ICI and the EET Committees to ensure that housing, transport and energy policies do much more to contribute towards our efforts to tackle climate change.



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Sustainable Development

The TICC Committee's legacy paper noted the role of committees in scrutinising sustainable development in the absence of SDC Scotland. With the loss of this independent scrutiny body, WWF is keen to ensure that there is some capacity with Parliamentary committees to scrutinise the Government's progress on aligning policy with Scotland's environmental, social and economic needs, now and in the future. WWF asks the Committee to ensure that sufficient scrutiny is given to Ministers' embedding sustainable development into the architecture of Government.

Marine / fisheries

As the RAE Committee's legacy paper noted, an area of importance is the implementation of the 2010 Scottish Marine Act. WWF Scotland asks Committee members to continue to hold the Government to account on its implementation, particularly the creation of a national marine plan and the designation of an ecologically coherent network of marine protected areas (MPAs).

The achievement of sustainable fisheries and aquaculture will be vital in helping to deliver good status for Scotland's waters. WWF believes that to secure a long-term future for fisheries in Scotland, a focus on conservation outcomes and long-term management is crucial, particularly under a reformed Common Fisheries Policy. WWF asks the Committee to voice strong support for stakeholder engagement in the management of Scottish fisheries, so that Scotland can demonstrate to its European colleagues the benefits of real decentralisation and of long-term management plans, fishery by fishery, devised and implemented by regional stakeholders. WWF also asks the Committee to look at further ways of reducing fishing mortality and increasing the value of the catch through measures such as MSC certification.

Waste

The Scottish Government's zero waste strategy must be implemented into the new session. Whilst recycling in Scotland is improving, our household recycling rates continue to fall behind those found in many European countries. There is an urgent need to cut the amount of waste we produce Scotland, and we should be seeking a waste prevention plan that commits and maps out how Scotland can cut waste volumes in half by 2020 (household, commercial and construction). Greater segregation of waste at source would reduce residual waste and maximise the reuse and recycling value of materials. Alongside a landfill ban for recyclable and organic waste measures such as a nationwide deposit return system, and support for variable waste charging for non-residual household waste would support making Scotland's zero waste aspiration a reality.

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