

Scottish Climate Change Bill

Briefing on ...

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Introduction

This briefing is on the Scottish Climate Change Bill, published by the Scottish Government in December 2008.

Background

Global warming is one of the biggest dangers facing humankind.

The Scottish Climate Change Bill aims to be world leading at a time when United Nations talks are under way to set new international targets on cutting greenhouse gas emissions.

The talks started in Bali in 2007, continue in Poznan, Poland, in December 2008 and aim to agree a successor deal to the Kyoto Protocol

at final negotiations in Copenhagen in December 2009.

International targets are currently aimed at capping global warming at around 2 degrees Celsius to prevent 'runaway' climate change. The Scottish people showed clear support for a strong bill, with more than 21,000 responses to the 2008 consultation, the most responses to any consultation other than the smoking ban.

Overview of legislation

The bill has been strengthened considerably since the initial proposals and includes the target of an 80% reduction in net Scottish emissions (from 1990/1995 baselines) by 2050, along with annual targets, as well as including emissions from aviation and shipping. It will cover all six greenhouse gases, not just CO₂.

Climate Change Minister Stewart Stevenson said that in order to deliver the targets, the Scottish Government is developing "a range of short, medium and long term policy options" to be published in 2009. A carbon assessment project aims to ensure climate change impacts are considered in future budgets and spending decisions.

The bill also:

- Sets an interim target of a 50% emissions reduction by 2030 and requires Ministers to report regularly to Parliament on progress.

- Lays out a timetable for setting annual targets, with 2011-2019 targets required simply to be "less than the target for the preceding year", while having regard to the interim and 2050 targets. For 2020-2050 there must be at least a 3% reduction annually.
- Allows Ministers to, by regulations, impose duties on and issue guidance to public bodies in relation to climate change, and require they report on discharging those duties.
- Makes provision for: various adaptation measures and for ways in which the Forestry Commission and the National Forest Estate can contribute to emissions reductions in areas such as renewable

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energy and woodland creation.

- Requires Ministers to produce an action plan on energy efficiency and to promote heat from renewables and enables Ministers to make regulations to support moves to a zero waste society, with, for

example, powers to introduce a tax on plastic bags if their use is not sufficiently reduced.

The Scottish Government will receive advice initially from the UK Committee on Climate Change, but will also have powers to set up a Scottish Committee if it sees fit.

UNISON and Stop Climate Chaos Scotland response

UNISON Scotland is a member of Stop Climate Chaos Scotland, a coalition of environmental, faith, development, trade union and other groups, which campaigned for three key 'asks' in the bill – a target to cut all greenhouse gas emissions by at least 80% by 2050; statutory annual targets to reduce emissions by at least 3% year on year and the inclusion of all emissions from international aviation and shipping.

The initial response of the SCCS coalition is to welcome the bill as providing the basis for genuinely world leading legislation.

However, there are a number of concerns which we will be addressing in campaigning over the coming months, with a focus on asking MSPs to further strengthen and improve the bill and a Climate Change Rally and lobby of MSPs on 22 April 2009.

SCCS and others are particularly concerned that the early targets are not stipulated, leading to fears that insufficient early action will be taken, making it much harder to meet the interim and 2050 targets.

There are also criticisms that many current policies, especially on

aviation and roads, are at odds with reducing emissions, and there are no sanctions for failing to hit targets. Also, the first assessment of annual targets would not come before Parliament until after the next election.

The provision for imposing duties on public bodies is welcome but UNISON had called for a duty on public bodies to consider climate change in all decisions and report on progress annually, with negotiated green workplace agreements.

The bill does not propose any specific duties as yet and promises Ministers would consult fully if using this provision. We believe there is strong support for specified duties now, without delay.

The bill makes no mention of sustainability principles, while referring to the need to take economic and fiscal circumstances into account when setting targets. UNISON Scotland believes the principles of sustainable development should be incorporated into the bill, in particular, that of ensuring a just society.

Action for Branches

Encourage all members to contact their MSPs to urge support for a strong bill www.unison-scotland.org.uk/greenworkplace/respondmsp.html

Support the Climate Change Rally and lobby on **Wed 22 April, 2009**, 11am to 2pm at the Scottish Parliament.

Let the Policy & Information team know about any campaigning work you are doing in your workplace and locally.

Further Information

Scottish Climate Change Bill
www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/bills/17-ClimateChange/index.htm

UNISON Scotland Green Workplace
www.unison-scotland.org.uk/greenworkplace

Stop Climate Chaos Scotland
www.stopclimatechaosscotland.org

TUC Go Green at Work guide
www.tuc.org.uk/extras/gogreenatwork.pdf

