



Scottish Government Debate: Climate Justice

28 February 2012

Climate Justice: a global and local issue

Friends of the Earth Scotland welcomes this debate on climate justice. Whether it is increased risk of flooding in Bangladesh or drought in Africa it is clear that the impacts of climate change are already affecting those in the global south disproportionately.ⁱ This is particularly unjust given that these societies have done least to cause the problem. Yet climate and environmental justice is also a domestic issue. A 2005 report found that people living in deprived areas in Scotland suffered disproportionately from industrial pollution, poor water and air quality.ⁱⁱ This situation isn't improving. Over a third of households now suffer from fuel poverty, while the poorest households, who are the most unlikely to own a car, are still the most likely to suffer from poor air quality due to congestion.ⁱⁱⁱ Measures to tackle these injustices, whether it is to insulate homes or reduce traffic volumes, would not only reduce emissions but also contribute to a fairer, more equitable and just society.

Sharing Scotland's ambition

One of the First Minister's themes during his speech on climate justice in China in December 2011 was the need to 'share Scotland's ambition'. Through the Climate Change (Scotland) Act, and Scotland's ambitious renewable targets, we have a positive story to tell. As a piece of legislation, the Act remains second to none. In recognition of this, and in order to influence the international context, Friends of the Earth Scotland has pushed the Act as an example for other nations to follow. In 2011 we travelled overland to Brussels, Helsinki, Madrid and Budapest to deliver lectures and workshops to parliamentarians, activists and invited audiences about the Climate Change (Scotland) Act. Other members of Stop Climate Chaos Scotland have done likewise. It is promising that a number of European countries, including Denmark, Finland, Austria and Ireland have recently implemented or plan to implement national climate change laws.

Yet we now need to deliver on our commitments. While Scottish emissions fell significantly in 2009, provisional data suggests they shot up again in 2010.^{iv} Serious Government investment, so far not sufficiently forthcoming, is needed to ensure Scotland's intentions are backed up with action.

The Report on Proposals and Policies (RPP)

In March 2011, the Government published the Report on Proposals and Policies (RPP), an action plan setting out how it intends to meet its emissions reductions targets over the next 12 years. While we believe the RPP could be stronger, it is widely recognised as a serious document containing a number of costed measures that could help reduce our emissions across the homes, transport, waste and land-use sectors. Yet, it needs to be properly funded and implemented if we are to have any confidence in meeting our targets. In particular, further action is required in the field of transport and energy efficiency in homes:

1. Transport

The RPP requires £487.5 million for low carbon transport measures for 2012-13.^v The 2012-13 draft budget initially provided for £30.65m.^{vi} While the Government has since committed an additional £13 million^{vii} this still leaves Government financing less than 10% of what its own climate action plan states is required for low carbon transport. This lack of funding is in sharp contrast to motorways and trunk roads spending which over the course of the spending review are due to receive more than £2 billion.

2. Energy efficiency

Scotland's homes are responsible for a quarter of our emissions. At the same time a third of Scots live in fuel poverty.^{viii} Experts estimate £170 million of Scottish Government investment is required for energy efficiency measures in order to cut emissions, eradicate fuel poverty and create jobs.^{ix} Although the Budget proposes an increase to £65 million from the £48million provided in 2011/12, this simply brings us back to a similar level of funding to that provided in 09/10 and 10/11.

Later this year the Government will publish a second RPP outlining how it will meet targets in the period 2023-2027. In doing so they will also revise the current RPP to reflect new emissions data. Government must ensure

this contains strong action on transport and energy efficiency and is a priority across departments.

Energy Generation

During his China speech the First Minister stated: "The world cannot continue to depend on methods of power generation which involve high levels of carbon emissions." Friends of the Earth Scotland wholeheartedly agree with this statement and hope Government will reject proposals for a 1600MW coal power station at Hunterston, Ayrshire. We hope too that Government will also consider a moratorium on 'fracking', a highly controversial unconventional gas extraction technique already taking place in Dumfries.

The only genuinely sustainable energy future for Scotland is clean, green renewable energy. Our research shows that renewables could comfortably provide 100% of our annual electricity demand by 2020, increasing up to 185% by 2030.^x This would allow Scotland to phase out all conventional thermal power, from coal, gas and nuclear, and not only keep the lights on but become a major exporter of green power.

Our leading role in the Industrial Revolution brings with it a responsibility to help deal with the resulting climate crisis. It is right that we should harness Scotland's renewable energy bounty, export renewable energy and help cut our own and the world's reliance on coal, oil and gas.

Climate Finance

The SNP manifesto contained a welcome commitment to work with partners to 'build a Scottish-wide climate adaptation fund'. While we hope this is taken forward we would also urge Government to leverage pressure on Scottish financial institutions, many of which have a global reach, to invest ethically and responsibly. The bailed out RBS is a major funder of tar sands extraction on indigenous land in Canada - an industry that has been described as the most environmentally damaging project on earth. In addition, a report published in late 2011 showed that RBS is the seventh largest global investor in coal mining and coal power plants.^{xi} If the UK Government can intervene with regard to bonuses it should also be prepared to intervene to ensure RBS lending practices match Government ambitions for the low carbon economy.

Conclusion

The Scottish Government's emphasis on climate justice is welcome. The Climate Change (Scotland) Act passed unanimously by Parliament in the last session was a crucial milestone in Scotland's contribution to international attempts to tackle climate change. This session of Parliament will be equally important if we are to see the necessary action and funding put in place to deliver our climate change commitments. Yet climate justice isn't just an issue for Government. Pressure needs to be leveraged on Scotland's international financial institutions too ensure they too abide by these important principles.

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i A good starting point on this is the UNFCCC (2007), 'Climate Change: Impacts, Vulnerabilities and Adaptation in Developing Countries':

<http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/publications/impacts.pdf>

ii SNIFFER report for Scottish Executive (2005) 'Investigating Environmental Justice in Scotland - Links Between Measures of Environmental Quality and Social

Deprivation': http://www.sniffer.org.uk/Resources/UE4%2803%2901/Layout_SustainablePlaces/10.aspx?backurl=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.sniffer.org.uk%3A80%2Four-work%2Fsustainable-places.aspx&selectedtab=completed

iii The Office of National Statistics (2002) shows that four fifths of the poorest 10% of households don't have access to a car. Yet this demographic group is most likely to suffer from the various public health issues caused by car use, see: <http://jpubhealth.oxfordjournals.org/content/33/2/160.full.pdf?keytype=ref&ikey=z5u6Wt5EzYwQ2BB>

iv Letter from the Lord Adair Turner to the Minister for Environment and Climate Change dated 31 January 2012:

<http://downloads.theccc.org.uk.s3.amazonaws.com/Scottish%20report/Adair%20Turner%20to%20Stewart%20Stevenson%2031%20Jan%202012%20-%20FOR%20WEB.pdf>

v This is calculated by taking 3/4 of the funding required in 2012 and 1/4 of the funding required in 2013. It should be made clear that the £487.5 could, in theory, be levered in from private sources.

vi This has been calculated by looking at all the budget lines which could fund transport items in the RPP and assuming that all this goes towards low carbon transport measures.

vii <http://www.cyclingscotland.org/news/sustainable-travel-funding-boost-millions-for-active-and-low-carbon-transport/>

viii <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Housing-Regeneration/TrendFuelPoverty>

ix See Poverty Advisory Group, eighth annual report, <http://bit.ly/rbKzE> and ACE's report on the economic impacts of a 42% emissions cut in Scotland's homes by 2020: <http://www.ukace.org/publications/ACE%20Research%20%282009-10%29%20-%20Warm%20Homes,%20Green%20Jobs%20%5Bbriefing%5D.pdf>

x Power of Scotland Secured: <http://www.foe-scotland.org.uk/power-secured>

xi 'Bankrolling Climate Change' (November, 2011), Banktrack: http://www.banktrack.org/download/bankrolling_climate_change/climatekillerbanks_final_0.pdf