



Friends of the Earth Scotland

Scottish Government Debate: Scotland's Contribution to UN Climate Summit

22 November 2011

Introduction

Friends of the Earth Scotland welcomes the opportunity to brief members ahead of the Scottish Government debate: Scotland's Contribution to the UN Climate Summit. Through the ambitious targets contained in the Climate Change (Scotland) Act, including 42% emissions reductions by 2020, the Scottish Parliament has the most ambitious national climate legislation anywhere in the world. It is therefore right that Parliament debates this subject and that Scottish Ministers form part of the UK delegation to the summit. Yet the Climate Change Act will count for little if the targets are not met. While Scottish emissions fell significantly in 2009, provisional data suggests they shot up again in 2010.¹ Serious Government investment, so far not forthcoming, is needed with regard to the energy efficiency of the housing stock and low carbon transport.

Climate Change (Scotland) Act

The Scottish Parliament recognised the importance of climate change and the need to tackle it, when it unanimously passed the Climate Change (Scotland) Act in 2009. 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 have pushed the Act as an example for other nations to follow. We have 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 implemented or plan to implement national climate change laws.

The Report on Proposals and Policies (RPP)

In March, the Government published the Report on Proposals and Policies (RPP)², 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. This document cannot afford to sit on a shelf. It needs to be properly funded and implemented if we are to have any confidence of meeting our targets. As the document itself makes clear, reliance on existing policies, without any new proposals, is only enough to meet three of our next 12 annual targets.

The Spending Review and Budget

Despite bringing the RPP forward, the Government, through the spending review and draft budget, are failing to properly fund the measures contained within it. Below we set out some key areas where Government action is lacking:

1) Low carbon transport

The RPP requires £487.5 million for low carbon transport measures for 2012-13.³ The 2012-13 draft budget provides for, at best, £30.65m.⁴ In short, the Budget is only funding 6% of what is required. The spending review doesn't fair much better, providing for only 10% of the funding required in low carbon transport to meet our targets.⁵

1 P.206 of the UK Committee on Climate Change progress report from June of this year, states: "Preliminary EU ETS data along with regional economic and temperature data suggest that emissions are likely to have increased across the devolved administrations in 2010 due to the cold weather and economic recovery". See: http://hmccc.s3.amazonaws.com/Progress%202011/CCC_Progress%20Report%202011%20Single%20Page%20no%20buttons_1.pdf

2 <http://scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Environment/climatechange/scotlands-action/lowcarbon/rpp>

3 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. How this might happen, particularly in the absence of any regulatory policies, is another question.

4 This has been calculated by looking at all the budget lines which could fund transport items in the RPP: vessels and piers, support for freight industry, sustainable and active travel, travel strategy and innovation and the warm homes and future transport funds, and assuming that all this goes towards low carbon transport measures.

5 £120.35m is provided across the three years of the Spending Review. The RPP requires £1226m

One of our particular concerns in relation to this funding is the budget line of sustainable and active travel, which has been cut by a third. This runs completely counter to the SNP manifesto commitment to “continue to increase the proportion of transport spending that goes on low carbon, active and sustainable travel”, as well as targets in the Cycling Action Plan for a tenfold increase, from 1 to 10%, in the journeys made by bike.⁶ This cut in funding is compounded by the contrast with motorways and trunk roads spending which is due to rise from £557.6m in 2011-12 to £655.4 in 2012-13. Over the course of the spending review over £2 billion will go to motorways and trunk roads.

Parliament, which unanimously passed the Climate Change Bill just over two years ago, must look carefully at the Budget’s spending priorities. A drastic increase in low carbon transport spending is required, particularly for active travel.

2) Energy efficiency in homes

Scotland’s homes are responsible for a quarter of our emissions. At the same time a third of Scots live in fuel poverty.⁷ Investment in energy efficiency is crucial if we are to cut emissions, eradicate fuel poverty and create jobs.⁸

Experts estimate £170 million of Scottish Government investment is required for energy efficiency measures, including home insulation schemes and the energy assistance package. Although the draft Budget proposes an increase to £65 million from the £48million provided in this financial year, this simply brings us back to a similar level of funding to that provided in 09/10 and 10/11.⁹ A substantial increase is still required.

Energy: renewables, oil and gas¹⁰

The Scottish Government’s target of 100% of our annual electricity demand from renewables by 2020 is exactly the type of figure we should be aiming for. Last year we commissioned the world’s leading renewable energy consultants, Garrad Hassan, to look at Scotland’s renewables potential. The ‘Power of Scotland Secured’ report concludes that renewables could comfortably provide 100% of our annual electricity demand by 2020, increasing up to 185% by 2030.¹¹

Yet generating more renewable energy will do nothing for the climate unless we simultaneously phase out our use of fossil fuels. The Power of Scotland Secured shows that by 2030 Scotland could 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. If it is sincere about contributing to global action on climate change, the Scottish Government must move to phase out use of fossil fuels. In the short term this means not supporting tax breaks for oil companies and reconsidering its opposition to a moratorium on deepwater drilling.

Conclusion

The Climate Change (Scotland) Act was a crucial milestone in Scotland’s contribution to international attempts to tackle climate change. The key challenge for the Scottish Government now is meeting those ambitious targets. That’s why this Parliamentary session is as crucial as the last: to ensure the necessary action and funding is put in place to keep Scotland on track to meet its commitments.

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6 <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/06/25103912/0>

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

8 See Poverty Advisory Group, eighth annual report, <http://bit.ly/rbBKzE> 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>

9 Energy efficiency funding between for the last and following three years is as follows: 2009-10 £65.9m; 2010-11 £70.9m; 2011-12 £48m; 2012-13 £65m; 2013-14 £65m; 2014-15 £66.25m

10 This section is distinct from the above because emissions from the energy and industrial sector are largely accounted for through the EU Emissions trading scheme. This means that while decarbonisation in the power sector reduces Scotland’s emissions, it does not contribute to meeting our targets in the Climate Act in the same way as action on transport and homes.

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