

# Scotland's climate change targets

Evidence to the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee  
Submitted - 15th September 2016

## Key points

- the targets' statutory instrument should be approved
- Parliament will need to return to revise Scotland's climate targets to be more ambitious as the implications of the Paris Agreement become clearer, results emerge from the Climate Change Plan and Energy Strategy modelling and the new Climate Change Bill takes shape
- the carbon units' statutory instrument should be approved as it helps concentrate policy initiatives on meeting our targets here in Scotland rather than buying international carbon credits
- stronger policy action is needed in relation to transport, buildings and agriculture

## Climate change

2016 is almost certain to be the warmest year ever recorded globally, beating 2015, which in turn beat 2014 for this record. All of the 10 hottest years on record have been since 1997. Scotland has not felt this record heat in the last couple of years because of changes in ocean currents and the high-atmosphere jet stream, although 8 of our 10 hottest years have been since 2000 and the warmest on record was 2014. From the melting of the Arctic ice to the growing number of climate refugees, the signs of climate change are stronger every year.

## Progress so far

The latest emissions figures are for 2014 and show that Scotland met its climate change target for that year. The UK Committee on Climate Change (UKCCC) published their fifth annual progress report for Scotland on the 13th September.<sup>1</sup> They said that Scotland has made good progress overall, with strong action on energy and waste, but needs much stronger policies in transport, agriculture and buildings to meet future targets.

## The Paris Agreement

Last year the world's governments created the Paris Agreement, which commits nations to keeping the global temperature rise well below 2°C and to try to keep it below 1.5°C. This is a positive intent but so far too little action is pledged by nations to keep the world even below a catastrophic 3.5°C temperature rise by 2100.

The UN process will therefore look for nations to be developing plans to do more, so that the Paris Agreement temperature limits can be achieved. This means every nation needs to try harder - including Scotland.

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<sup>1</sup> UKCCC 5th annual progress report for Scotland - <https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/reducing-emissions-in->

## The Targets Statutory Instrument

The Climate Change (Annual Targets) (Scotland) Order 2016 is the Scottish Statutory Instrument required by the 2009 Climate Act to set annual targets for the years 2028 to 2032. The Scottish Government have, as required, taken advice from the UK Committee on Climate Change and chosen the more ambitious of two options presented.<sup>2</sup>

In itself and in the context of the 2009 Act, this is a sensible and uncontentious proposal which the Committee should support.

However, Scotland is about to embark on several rounds of new thinking on climate change, which mean the Committee should bear in mind that we will need to return to Scotland's annual targets with a view to making them more ambitious. The factors which will require us to review the targets are:

The implications of **the Paris Agreement** and the need to aim for 1.5°C. The UKCCC will publish advice on what this means for the UK's climate targets and policies next month, and will build the need for more ambition into the advice they are due to give Scotland on targets for the new Climate Change Bill.

**Long-term ambition** - in light of the Paris Agreement it will be hugely disappointing if we are still aiming for only 80% reductions by 2050, rather than setting a date much sooner when Scotland will be fossil free and zero emissions. The TIMES model which is being used by the Scottish Government to develop the Climate Change Plan is good for short term predictions but cannot accurately predict what technological solutions we will be using in 2050, so the targets for later years should be set on the basis of the needs of climate science rather than solely on the basis of what the model says might be possible.

The **Climate Change Plan** - the third Report on Proposals and Policies - is required by the 2009 Act to spell out how we will meet future climate targets and will be submitted to the Committee for scrutiny in January. It will be based on extensive modelling of emissions from all sectors of the Scottish economy and will need to contain strong policies in many areas in order to meet our targets and to realise the additional jobs, economic and health benefits of moving to a low-carbon economy.

The **new Climate Change Bill**. The SNP manifesto and the Programme for Government promise a new Climate Change Bill with a 2020 target of "more than 50%." It is proposed to adopt a new accounting system under the new Climate Change Bill, which will mean we will see full credit for actions in the energy sector, including a drop of around 10 million tonnes of carbon dioxide from the closure of Longannet power station. This is equivalent to about 20% of Scotland's current emissions. The UKCCC have already said that the 2020 target would need to be around 56% (in the new accounting system) to be broadly equivalent to the 42% target set in the 2009 Act (under the current accounting system). Also important in driving early action will be the ambition of the targets in the early 2020s.

A **Fair Shares approach** looks at the historical responsibility of countries for causing climate change and the capacity of countries to implement policies to reduce emissions. It therefore inevitably concludes that industrialised nations should do more than countries which have only recently industrialised. This approach was used in the civil society 'Fair Shares' report to assess the pledges from countries in the run up to last year's Paris climate conference, which concluded that the EU as whole was offering cuts which are less than a quarter of what is needed.<sup>3</sup> This type of analysis suggests the UK should be aiming for reductions of between

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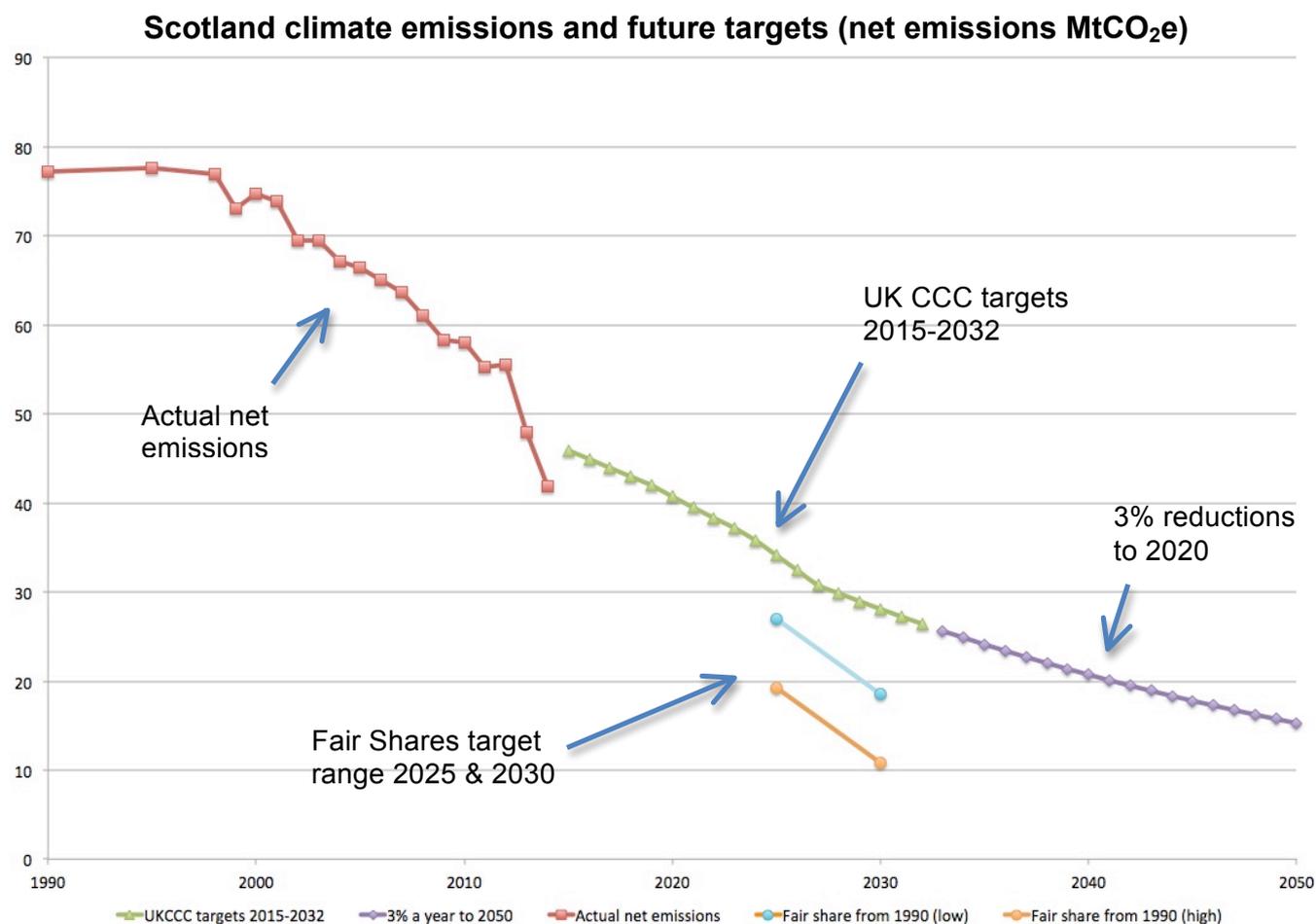
<sup>2</sup> <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0050/00502791.pdf> and <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0049/00496795.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Fair Shares: A civil society equity review of INDCs - <http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/fair-shares-a-civil-society-equity-review-of-indcs-579848>

65% and 75% by 2025 and 76% and 86% by 2030.<sup>4</sup> These are shown for Scotland on the graph below and should be part of the discussions over the level of ambition for the new Bill.

### The Carbon Units Statutory Instrument

This is an uncontroversial proposal to bar Scottish Ministers from using internationally-traded carbon credits to meet our targets. The 2009 Act already contains a limit on the number of such units that can be used but this Instrument reduces that capacity to zero for the years 2018 to 2022. This is a good proposal because it means we will concentrate on meeting our targets through emissions reduction actions at home rather than trying to buy our way out of trouble. The Committee should support this proposal.



*N.B. this graph shows a big drop in 2014, mainly due to changes in the EU Emissions Trading Scheme and warm winters. Because of changes in the underlying data the UKCCC have determined that the 40% by 2020 target of the 2009 Act is equivalent to a 47% cut in the current figures. The Scottish Government's 'more than 50%' pledge is under the new accounting system.*

#### For further information contact

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.climatefairshares.org>