



Friends of the Earth Scotland

# Scottish Government Debate: Taking Scotland Forward - Rural Affairs and the Environment

21 June 2011

## Introduction

Friends of the Earth Scotland welcomes the opportunity to brief members ahead of the Scottish Government debate. For Friends of the Earth Scotland, the environment is as much about people and communities as it is about wildlife and biodiversity.

This session of Parliament is hugely significant if Scotland is to take the decisions needed to achieve its ambitious climate change targets and move towards a fairer and more environmentally sustainable economy. Below we deal with some of the key issues and areas for action in the 2011-2016 term, namely where Government responsibility for climate change should lie, the importance of implementing funded policies to achieve our climate change targets, waste policy, access to environmental justice, food policy and alternatives to GDP.

## Climate change responsibility within Government

The increasingly evident impacts of climate change make the relationship between people, the environment and economic development ever more important. In much the same spirit as we welcomed the inclusion of climate change in the Finance and Sustainable Development portfolio in 2007, we have concerns that it has been re-integrated into the Rural Affairs and Environment portfolio. Having said this, perhaps more importantly than overall responsibility is the priority that is placed upon it across Government. **We would welcome reassurance from the Minister that climate change will continue to be a consideration across all areas of Government, and its mitigation will be at the heart of activity for every Government department.**

## Achieving the targets in the Climate Change Act

Scotland has been rightly praised for the world-leading targets in the Climate Change (Scotland) Act. The Government's 'report on proposals and policies' (RPP) sets out how it intends to meet these targets. Yet, the document makes clear that reliance on existing 'policies' (rather than 'proposals') will only be enough to meet 3 out of the next 12 annual targets. There is an urgent need to ensure the proposals in the RPP are turned into funded policies. In particular, ahead of the next financial budget, we would urge that greater effort is given to increased funding for energy efficiency in buildings, walking and cycling measures and greener procurement. At a time of tightened budgets it is crucial that Government spending is targeted on measures that deliver multiple benefits. As our report, '42% Better', makes clear, these measures deliver significant social and economic benefits – tackling fuel poverty, reducing obesity and improving individuals lifestyles - as well reducing emissions.<sup>1</sup> **We would welcome an update from the Minister about how proposals in the RPP are being turned into policies to help deliver Scotland's climate change targets.**

## Waste Policy

While good progress on recycling has been made the overall level of waste produced in Scotland is still going up every year. The Government must give more attention, focus and funding to waste reduction measures. This should include establishing ambitious waste reduction targets to cut climate emissions by at least 50% by 2020. The mechanisms available to achieve these targets include local taxation, domestic waste charging (with parallel waste incentives), a nationwide deposit return scheme and education and regulation. **We would welcome a commitment from the Minister that reduction is the Governments top priority for dealing with waste.**

Because of this increasing level of waste being produced, Scotland's communities are facing increasingly problematic issues around incineration. Consideration should be given to selective incineration bans for materials that can be reused, recycled or composted. This would mirror the proposals being considered by the UK and Scottish Government for selective *landfill* bans. In addition Government should explore

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.foe-scotland.org.uk/42percent-report>

measures, such as a social enterprise or employment fund, which could stimulate community-recycling centres as an alternative to environmentally damaging incinerators. **We would be interested to find out if the Government is considering selective incineration bans.**

### **Access to Environmental Justice**

Access to justice in Scotland is costly, difficult and not in line with the Aarhus Convention. This leads to inequality between corporations and the wealthy who can afford to bring a case forward and community groups, NGOs and the poor who – quite literally – can't afford to. Government needs to take steps to reduce the high cost and liability that individuals face when taking an environmental case to court as well as ensuring that the new sufficient interest test recommended by Lord Gill is broad enough to allow communities and NGOs access to the courts. **We would welcome an update from the Minister as to what action the Government is taking to reduce high costs and ensure Scotland complies with the Aarhus Convention.**

### **Food policy**

Through projects such as the Fife Diet, networks such as Nourish, organic farms and box schemes and rising demand for allotments, there is an increasingly buoyant local food movement in Scotland. For this to be sustained it needs to be supported at the national level. Government should consider setting a 20:20:20 target, requiring 20% of Scotland's food to be sourced from within 20 miles by 2020. Measures to deliver this include a 'community right to grow' allowing communities to use unused, derelict land to grow vegetables; revisiting the national food policy to ensure more emphasis is given to the concept of 'food sovereignty' and 'food for people' as opposed to 'food for exports'<sup>2</sup>; and implementing a green procurement bill ensuring Scotland's public sector supplies local, sustainable, healthy, organic food.<sup>3</sup> **We would be interested to know if the Minister will give consideration to requiring 20% of Scotland's food to be sourced from within 20 miles by 2020 and a 'community right to grow'.**

### **Beyond GDP**

There is a recognition across the political spectrum that while some people may be better off materially than ever before, this doesn't necessarily translate to a happier more satisfied society or a more stable, job-providing economy. As reports such as 'Prosperity without Growth' and the 'Spirit Level' make clear, wellbeing in society and economic success is not simply defined by wealth but importantly too by issues of sustainability and equality.<sup>4</sup> With organisations such as the Sustainable Development Commission being wound up, there is a need for Government to ensure sustainability is mainstreamed across Government departments. In addition, a recent Carnegie report, 'Measuring what Matters', suggests that the National Performance Framework offers an opportunity for the Scottish Government to take this agenda forward.<sup>5</sup> **We would welcome a response from the Minister as to how he is taking forward alternative measures of GDP.**

### **Conclusion**

This session of Parliament is crucial if Government is to take the steps needed to implement our ambitious climate change targets and ensure Scotland is a fairer more sustainable place. Tough action will be needed to ensure Government acts with climate change as a priority, turns 'proposals' into funded 'policies' to meet our climate change targets, reduces our waste mountain and implements full and affordable access to environmental justice. At the same time there are huge opportunities to Scotland if we implement innovate proposals, such as a community right to grow to support local food and alternatives to GDP as a measure of success. Taken together we believe these measures would not only reduce Scotland's greenhouse gas emissions but also deliver multiple benefits that make Scotland a fairer, healthier, greener place.

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2 <http://www.foei.org/en/what-we-do/food-sovereignty>

3 East Ayrshire has delivered excellent results through its school meals programme

([www.brass.cf.ac.uk/uploads/Sus\\_Community/Case\\_Study\\_School\\_Meals.pdf](http://www.brass.cf.ac.uk/uploads/Sus_Community/Case_Study_School_Meals.pdf)) through its food for life initiative, while the SNP committed to a sustainable procurement bill in its manifesto.

4 <http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/publications.php?id=914> and <http://www.equalitytrust.org.uk/resource/the-spirit-level>

5 <http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/2011/more-than-gdp--measuring-what-matters>