

A greener Scotland

11 June 2007



Friends of
the Earth
Scotland

1. Introduction

Friends of the Earth Scotland welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the debate on a 'greener Scotland' ahead of the Executive debate on Wednesday 13 June.

We welcome many of the commitments made in the SNP manifesto and those of other parties. In this briefing, we focus primarily on three of these: climate change, energy policy and waste policy. In particular, since climate change is the greatest challenge facing Scotland, we welcome the Executive commitment to early introduction of a Scottish Climate Change Bill.

2. Climate Change Bill

We are pleased at the Executive commitment to a Scottish Climate Change Bill, with 3% per annum reductions in emissions and a longer-term target of an 80% reduction by 2050. We believe that, in addition to a UK climate change bill to set emissions reduction targets, a Scottish bill is also needed. This is because many relevant policy issues are devolved, but also because of practical differences such as Scotland's substantial renewable energy resource which means emissions reductions may be met through different measures, and more ambitious emissions reductions targets may be appropriate.

2.1 Limiting global warming to two degrees

There is a developing scientific consensus that our best chances of avoiding catastrophic climate change would be to limit global temperature increases to around two degrees centigrade¹. In order to aim for climate change not to exceed this level, it is likely that atmospheric concentrations of carbon will need to be kept below 450 ppmv or even lower. The implications of this for Scotland are a likely 80% reduction in emissions by 2050, and we welcome Ministers' recognition of this fact.

2.2 Annual reporting and debate

We support annual reporting on emissions reductions, ideally complemented by an annual debate in parliament. While we recognise that many of the 'levers' to reduce greenhouse gas emissions are likely to have an effect over a longer timescale than a single year, it is vital that any carbon budgeting period does not extend beyond a parliamentary term. This is to avoid the risk of Ministers delaying the difficult decisions needed to reduce emissions, and shifting responsibility onto the following Executive. This scenario would risk 'buck passing' and not emissions reductions.

3. Energy policy

We welcome Ministers' stated aims to set a Scottish Energy policy, with energy efficiency at its heart. We believe there is a strong case for additional powers over energy policy to be devolved to the Scottish Executive, to enable a consistent approach.

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3.1 Energy efficiency

We welcome the focus on energy efficiency at the heart of energy policy². In particular, we welcome a focus on reducing emissions from buildings, since nearly half our carbon emissions come from the built environment. Even given recent amendments to building regulations, Scotland still lags nearly 30 years behind the best standards in Sweden³. To make up this gap in the space of one parliament is ambitious, but we will entirely support any Executive that attempts it. In addition, evidence suggests that energy efficiency standards in building regulations are not currently being complied with. We warmly welcome the signal that the new Executive will address this.

3.2 Avoiding the nuclear option

Nuclear power is expensive, unwanted and unnecessary in the fight against climate change. Opinion polls consistently show that Scots prefer investment in renewables rather than nuclear⁴, and we welcome the fact that the new Executive and the majority of the new parliament recognises this. In addition, since a strategy for managing our radioactive waste has still not been found, any moves towards new nuclear power would not be prudent.

4. Zero-waste Scotland

Friends of the Earth Scotland fully supports the SNP manifesto pledge to aspire to achieve a zero waste Scotland. The amount of waste being recycled in Scotland each year is still outweighed by the increase in waste being produced. Zero waste does not just mean managing waste better, it means managing resources better and eliminating waste, encompassing design of materials and goods, producer responsibility, waste reduction, reuse and recycling all within a single framework. Friends of the Earth Scotland urges the Scottish Executive to set a timetable for moving Scotland towards zero waste and to draw up an action plan for achieving this.

5. Joined-up delivery of a sustainable Scotland

The environment is clearly a critical area of policy, and we welcome the Executive's moves to 'join up' environmental policy through its reorganisation of Executive departments. We believe this should be reinforced through the introduction of new measures of progress and sustainability and enhanced scrutiny of sustainable development by Parliament, for example with a revised remit for the Audit committee. It is also vital that all sectors contribute to greenhouse gas emissions reductions, including the transport sector, where emissions are currently rising. Achieving emissions reductions from transport will be difficult – if not impossible – if planned major roads projects proceed and investment in world-class public transport is cancelled.

6. About Friends of the Earth Scotland

Friends of the Earth Scotland is an independent member of the Friends of the Earth International network. We undertake research, advocacy and community development activities throughout Scotland in pursuit of environmental justice and sustainability.

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¹ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2007) *Climate Change 2007: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability*
<http://www.ipcc.ch/SPM13apr07.pdf>

² In the Energy White Paper debate on 27 May 2007, Mike Weir MP stated, "We believe that energy efficiency should be given the highest priority." See <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmhansrd/cm070523/debtext/70523-0006.htm#07052360001565>

³ From 1 May 2007, backstop U-values in domestic Scottish buildings are 0.2/0.3/0.25 W/m²K respectively in roofs/walls/floors. Tougher standards than these were introduced in Sweden in 1978. See Energy Advisory Associates (2001) *Building in ignorance*
<http://www.ukace.org/pubs/reportfo/BuildIgn.pdf>

⁴ For example, see <http://www.greenpeace.org.uk/media/reports/scottish-energy-opinion-a-survey-by-2collaborate>