



# Sustainable Development and the Domestic Sector

The UK has legally binding commitments under the Kyoto Protocol to reduce its emissions of a basket of gases, including CO<sub>2</sub>. To this end the Government has committed itself to reducing our overall output of CO<sub>2</sub> by 20% by 2010. Under devolution the Scottish Executive is obliged to fulfil its share of such reductions. Developments in the domestic, transport, industrial and service sectors all need to contribute towards an overall reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

## **Climate change and the domestic sector**

It is estimated that the domestic sector in Scotland is responsible for around 14% of our total CO<sub>2</sub> emissions<sup>1</sup>. Any realistic sustainable development policy must therefore take account of the domestic sector.

Under the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 (HECA), Local Authorities are required to develop and publish strategies which will lead to improvements in domestic energy efficiency. The improvements should be in the region of 30% increased energy efficiency by around 2007 over 1997 levels. Such developments are vital in the Government's drive to reduce overall CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Any failing here will offset progress in other sectors.

HECA reports which were due in at the end of January 2000 are likely to show serious shortcomings in progress towards this target. This state of affairs cannot continue. Transport policy is failing to deliver sufficient improvements in relation to the production of CO<sub>2</sub>, in the service sector the easiest changes have been made and emissions are predicted to begin rising again, and we cannot know as yet how the industrial sector will perform. It is therefore vital the domestic sector is made to deliver.

Without significant improvement in the energy efficiency of households, the Government's commitment to an overall reduction of 20% in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions is unrealistic. Furthermore, taking into account the performance of the other sectors, the Government's legal obligation to reduce the output of the basket of six greenhouse gases by 12.5% will be difficult to achieve.

This has serious, long-term implications for global warming and climate change.

## **Climate change and fuel poverty**

Friends of the Earth's ethos of Environmental Justice means that we are concerned not only about the exploitation of resources and pollution but, the distribution of these and the social and economic effects of this distribution.

In housing, fuel poverty results from a combination of low income, fuel price and inefficient use of energy through poor construction, materials and heating systems. This is exacerbated by the lack of capital for investment in energy efficiency measures. This has disastrous effects upon peoples' immediate quality of life and adds to the long-term and irreversible damage caused to the global environment. Thus the environmental cost of this goes beyond the confines of Scotland and our own time.

<sup>1</sup> Figures from National Environmental Technology Centre report November 1999. These however, relate only to consumption of coal, oil and gas in homes and exclude generation of electricity for the domestic sector. The overall CO<sub>2</sub> output from the domestic sector is not calculable from these figures but is estimated to be in the region of 20%-25%.

We have a duty to improve the housing stock for current and future generations of Scots. Moreover, we have responsibilities, and have made commitments, to ensure our development does not result in levels of pollution which cause global and long-term damage. We must ensure no less than a decent environment for all; no more than a fair share of the Earth's resources.

## Solutions

Current legislation and policy is inadequate to ensure buildings are brought up to a standard of energy efficiency which will significantly reduce CO<sub>2</sub> output across the domestic sector and eradicate fuel poverty.

There are many policies aimed at the domestic sector's energy efficiency which can be adapted and expanded to help alleviate these problems, and can be delivered through the Scottish Parliament.

- The Scottish Executive must commit itself to the abolition of fuel poverty by 2007 as per the Labour Party's manifesto commitments
- A Housing Bill which recognises fuel poverty to be a central consideration in housing policy with specific and wide ranging measures aimed at eradicating fuel poverty and reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions through energy efficiency measures.
- An increase in the funding levels of the various programmes which impact positively upon energy efficiency, particularly the Warm Deal.
- A tightening of the Building Regulations in relation to thermal efficiency.
- An extension of energy efficiency Building Regulations into existing housing.
- The inclusion of an energy efficiency measurement in the Tolerable Standard.
- Energy labelling of all dwellings in Scotland and an assessment of CO<sub>2</sub> consumption.
- The licensing of the private rented sector with minimum energy efficiency requirements.
- A move towards seller's surveys with energy audits included.

The quality, construction and energy efficiency of our built environment is central to our quality of life. How we exploit and distribute resources across society and across the globe is the central issue in bringing about these quality of life improvements for our citizens, while safeguarding the environment.

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Campaigning for Environmental Justice

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