



Scotland's path to a low carbon economy

Stop Climate Chaos Scotland welcomes the UK Committee on Climate Change (CCC) report as a valuable contribution to the debate on how to meet Scotland's world-leading climate change targets. We are pleased that the CCC have confirmed that 42% by 2020 is an appropriate target for Scotland to be aiming for. At the public launch of the report Committee member Professor Jim Skea said the 42% emissions reductions target by 2020 is achievable, especially if the European target increases to 30%. David Kennedy, the CCC's Chief Executive, said he thought the UK would be moving to 42% in the next year or two, because it was very likely that Europe would up its 2020 targets.¹ SCCS fully supports calls for the UK and EU to increase their targets.

Yet as things stand the EU and UK have lower targets than Scotland. Given some of the levers to reduce emissions are held at these levels, the report proposes three options for the Scottish Government to consider, although they don't endorse or favour any particular option. The CCC's three options for meeting the 2020 target are:

1) Lower the target to 38%

SCCS believes there is no justification to lower the targets the Climate Change Act passed unanimously by Parliament less than a year ago. Reducing the 42% target would send completely the wrong signal to the EU and others at a crucial time when efforts to tackle climate change need to be stepped up. We strongly welcome the Government's commitment that this is not being considered. At the CCC report launch Stuart Stevenson stated: "having set a 42% target, that is one we should stick to ... it is certainly our intention to stick to 42%". Similarly a spokesman for the Scottish Government has said a reduction in the 42 per cent target is "not on the agenda".²

2) Meet a 42% target through carbon trading

SCCS do not believe that this is an appropriate manner in which to meet our targets. The CCC's own advice in relation to this proposal states: "such credit purchase would not help Scotland to be on the path to meeting the 80% emissions reduction target in 2050 and would have limited global environmental impact."³ SCCS continues to highlight concerns that carbon credits do not lead to additional emissions reductions, can have negative social and environmental impacts in developing countries and could lead to a sub-prime crash in the carbon market.⁴ We are again encouraged by the Government's commitment not to rely on buying carbon credits in order to meet our targets. In Copenhagen, Alex Salmond told us:

Forty two per cent is ours. That's our target. When we do carbon trading, that would be in addition and I would have to be convinced that the carbon trading system was equitable, fair and balanced. I'm not absolutely convinced it would be right now. Regardless of what happens here (Copenhagen), the target is legally binding. We won't renege. We will get to 42 per cent by 2020."

1 Speaking at the UK CCC report launch, Edinburgh Royal Botanic Gardens, 24 February 2010

2 <http://news.scotsman.com/scotland/EU-39must-pull-its-weight.6098160.jp>

3 Page 8 UK CCC's advice 'Scotland's path to a low-carbon economy'. Full report available at: <http://www.theccc.org.uk/reports/scottish-report>

4 For example see: Friends of the Earth's 'A Dangerous Obsession': http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/reports/dangerous_obsession_sum.pdf; and Christian Aid's 'The role of Carbon Markets in Countering Climate Change': <http://www.christianaid.org.uk/images/signposts-carbon-markets.pdf>

3) Meet a 42% target through extra effort in the non-traded sector

The non-traded sector includes areas such as transport, agriculture, forestry, renewable heat, waste and energy efficiency. This option would involve the Scottish Government aiming for a 47% emissions reduction target in the non-traded sector to meet a 42% reduction across the economy. Taking into account progress made since 1990, this 47% translates to a 32% cut on 2005.

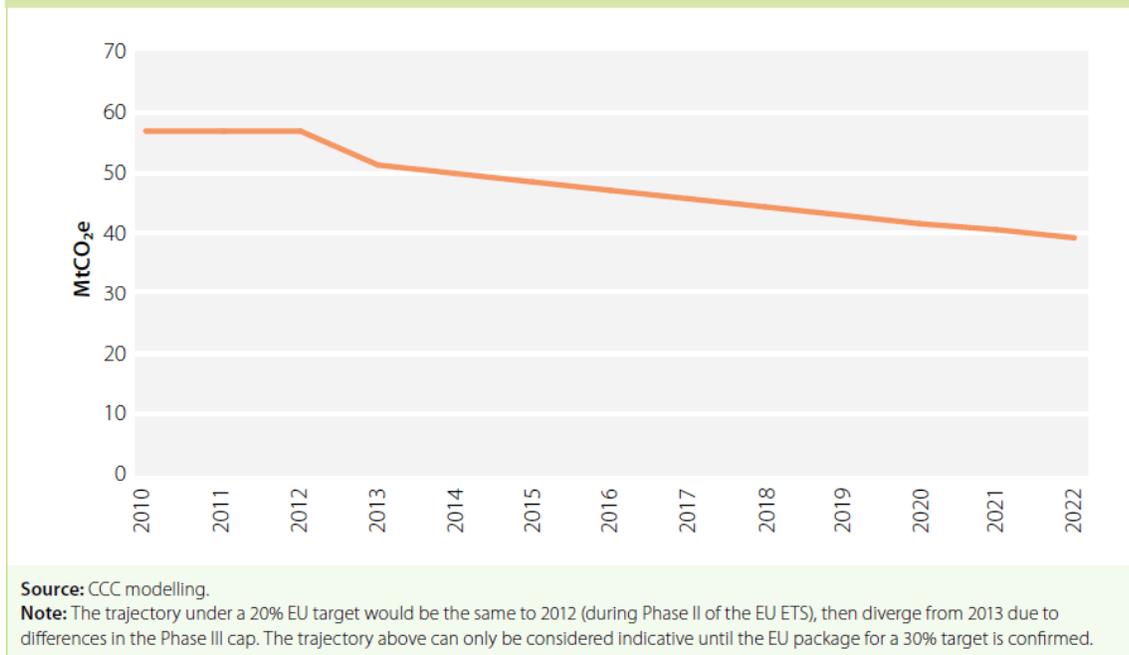
The CCC suggest there may be a 2.4MtCO₂e gap between what the Scottish Government can deliver and the 42% target if the EU does increase to a 30% by 2020 target. New work by the IUCN Peatland Programme has identified savings of at least this size which could be gained from protecting our peatlands better. These gains are not included in the CCC analysis. As the CCC have said themselves, much of their analysis is a disaggregation of UK figures and 'a Scotland specific analysis may throw up [other] numbers...'⁵ SCCS believe additional action in other areas - improving housing, and increasing public transport, walking and cycling, would also deliver big health and social benefits as well as being good for job creation and emissions reduction. This proposal also has the added benefit of leaving open the potential to achieve even more than 42% by 2020 if the EU target does increase from 20% to 30%.

Other issues considered

There are a range of other issues that the CCC gave advice upon.

1) Annual targets

Figure 5.2 Indicative economy-wide emissions trajectory for Scotland to reach a 42% 2020 target under a 30% EU target (2010-2022)



⁵ David Kennedy speaking at the public launch, Edinburgh Royal Botanic Gardens, 24 February 2010

One of the key features of Scotland's Act is that it has annual targets. These annual targets must reduce emissions every year under the Act. The CCC's suggested annual targets are based on business as usual proposals and include some allowance for rebound from the recession. Despite a pretty consistent fall in emissions for the last two decades, they suggest no real reduction for the next three years. While new policies will have a time lag before delivering reductions, we believe this fails to reflect current action to increase the rate of cuts. No one is suggesting that business as usual is good enough so we expect the Scottish Government to propose more ambitious targets for 2010-2012 in the statutory instrument on annual targets.

2) Aviation

Because the CCC is doing more work on international aviation emissions later in the year they have been rather cautious on how to include it. The Scottish Government has already consulted on this and another statutory instrument will lock us into accounting for these emissions in a certain way. We would like to see Scotland start with a better system from the start. In particular the CCC recommends setting the multiplier to allow for the extra impact of emissions at altitude at 1, i.e. ignoring the problem. There is a lot of work going on trying to estimate what this number should be, but what is certain is that it must be greater than 1 and current estimates suggest it is around 2. In addition to being closer to the real impact of emissions at altitude, a multiplier of 2 would also be an important message to the international community about these extra impacts of aviation.

3) Cumulative Budget

Ministers are required to set annual targets in line with 'a fair and safe cumulative budget'. This is essential if we are to be confident that we are doing what the science and justice demand. Unfortunately the CCC have not calculated a cumulative budget for Scotland (despite this being requested) because they are planning work on this later in the year. SCCS believes a fair and safe cumulative budget must be calculated at the earliest possible opportunity and Ministers must account for this when laying annual targets.

Conclusion

As the CCC has said, the three options for meeting Scotland's 2020 emissions reduction target involve 'political judgement'. Having passed a world leading climate act it is now time for the Scottish Government to step up and deliver it. While this will be made simpler when the UK and EU increase their targets – and SCCS supports calls for this to happen - Scotland must get on with delivering the commitment it has made. Planning for an ambitious target without recourse to trading would be the best option for Scotland. SCCS strongly encourages Government and parliamentarians of all parties to support this option going forward.

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Stop Climate Chaos Scotland (SCCS) is a growing coalition of organisations campaigning on climate change. SCCS brings together environment, faith and development organisations, trade unions, community activists, and womens and students groups.

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