

# Climate Change Plan Update Debate

A Friends of the Earth Scotland briefing

8 March 2021



**Friends of  
the Earth  
Scotland**

## Summary

Friends of the Earth Scotland welcomes the opportunity for MSPs to debate the cross-party report on the Climate Change Plan update (CCPu), which reflects the significant concerns Friends of the Earth Scotland has raised related to the update. We hope to see Tuesday's debate focus on how the final CCPu must:

- Give greater clarity on how emission reduction envelopes were calculated, and the emissions impact of each policy and proposal
- Review the plan's overreliance on Negative Emission Technologies (NETs) towards the end of this decade, technologies which have a long history of being over promised and under delivered.
- Turn the language of Just Transition and Green Recovery, that runs through the plan, into action.

## Overview

The Scottish Government's Climate Change Plan update has a key role to play in helping achieve our climate change targets. Limited progress has been made in sufficiently cutting Scotland's total emissions to date, with not only the [2017](#) and [2018](#) targets being missed but emissions rising by 1.5% between these two periods.

The joint reports from four of Parliament's committees rightly highlights that we need urgent action to tackle the climate emergency. With less than 10 years to hit the important 2030 target of reducing emissions by 75%, we cannot afford to wait for the next full Climate Change Plan to kickstart climate action, and the final update must evidence how every sector will deliver on emission reductions now.

As the committees' reports suggest, the draft update fell short on delivering this in a number of areas - including not providing the necessary level of policy detail to achieve this, and setting unrealistic timescales for the introduction of 'negative emission technologies'. The Government must take the committee's feedback on board before producing the final update.

## Policy detail and Ambition

While the CCPu introduced some welcome new commitments, like the target for reducing car kilometers, overall it lacks the policy detail and calculations on how it will meet the 2030 target.

The ECCLR committee rightly called for more detail on how emissions envelopes have been calculated, and particularly how the policies and proposals will amount to the emissions reductions. This level of detail is crucial for assessing the impact of each proposal, as well as giving greater transparency in how our emissions targets will be achieved. It is disappointing it wasn't included in the original draft update.

The CCPu's continued reference to vaguely 'review' plans and reliance on future 'policy statements' and 'action plans' risks delaying action and missing the urgency of the climate emergency. We agree with the ECCLR committee that greater clarity is required on when the next steps will be taken to turn policies and proposals into concrete actions.

## Negative Emission Technologies (NETs)

FoES have long held concerns about the risk of over relying on NETs to achieve our climate targets, given their history of overpromising and under delivering. The update particularly lacks transparency on how NETs figures have been calculated,

with the research suggesting that the plan's estimates for the role of NETs to reduce emissions by the end of this decade are very optimistic.

[New research](#) shows that we shouldn't expect CCS to come online until at least 2030, raising questions over the plan's dependence on these technologies in the late 2020s. This reliance risks leaving the Government with only a short window to recoup any emission reduction failures should CCS not materialise at the scale required, after spending hundreds of millions of pounds of public funds on projects that weren't able to deliver crucial emission reductions.

On top of general concerns about the timescales of CCS deployment, we have specific concerns about the estimated capacity of CCS in the update. Acorn, Scotland's biggest CCS facility, is largely geared up to focus on storage, rather than carbon capture - and there is currently no real and actionable plan in place to capture carbon on site at any major emitters in Scotland. It is therefore unclear, and not addressed in the update, where the predicted 3.8MtCO<sub>2</sub>e of carbon capture will come from by 2030.

The ECCLR committee report is absolutely right to recommend the Scottish Government "*reviews the abatement potential and schedule associated with the planned NETs*".

### **Plan B**

Given the high risk, and repeated warnings during committee evidence, of NETs not delivering the 3.8MtCO<sub>2</sub>e of carbon capture needed by 2030, the ECCLR Committee are absolutely right to recommend the Scottish Government bring forward a 'Plan B' for how it will make up for equivalent emissions reductions. This should focus on investing in scaling up those existing opportunities to decarbonise,

especially areas with high green job creation potential - like renewable energy, electrification, and decommissioning fossil fuels at source.

We have particularly supported calls to accelerate spending on energy efficiency and fuel poverty programmes, as well as investing in developing Scotland's public transport network. Investment of public money into technologies that may never work and risk us missing targets must be avoided and urgent action to decarbonise needs to be taken today.

### **Just Transition and a Green Recovery**

The ECCLR committee heard from a number of witnesses who raised concerns that the timescales within the update didn't clearly seize immediate opportunities to deliver a green recovery. We echo the recommendation that the final update should be clearer on the policies within the update that will make an immediate contribution to the green recovery.

Similarly, the increased reference to a just transition across the update is welcome - but experience to date demonstrates that promises of green jobs and positive outcomes are easily broken without the concrete policy action to deliver. The CCPu talks about being informed by the advice of the Just Transition Commission, but little action has been taken to put the Commission's Interim Report into action.

The final update set out how their rhetoric on delivering a just transition will be turned into action, and how the Scottish Government will implement the Just Transition Commission's report in full.

#### **For more information contact:**

Fergus Boden                      Jess Cowell  
Parliamentary Officer   Climate Campaigner  
fboden@foe.scot                      jcowell@foe.scot