

Climate Change (Emissions Reductions Bill)

A Friends of the Earth Scotland Briefing
October 2024



Summary

- The 2030 target set by the 2019 Climate Change Act was ambitious but completely achievable.
- At the time the CCC wrote to the Scottish Government outlining how the target could be met through bold and ambitious action.
- The need to amend the targets now is solely down to Scottish Government inaction.
- We welcome the Scottish Governments intention to keep annual reporting of emissions reductions.
- We welcome the Scottish Governments intention to keep the 2045 target.
- However we need to see urgent and radical action taken now or the 2045 target will not be met.
- The Scottish Government has not implemented any policies or taken any actions that led us to believe that the 2045 target will be met.

Introduction

Scotland is currently off track to meet its carbon emissions reductions targets. This is solely due to Scottish Government inaction. The targets, while ambitious, were achievable. Had the Scottish Government taken bold action they would have been able to meet these targets. This is not a case of over ambitious targets but a failure of the Scottish Government.

Publishing Carbon Budgets

The Scottish Government should not wait on the UK's seventh carbon budget before publishing carbon budgets of their own. They must act urgently to get back on track and do everything in their power to do so; this includes planning carbon budgets pre-CCC advice and enacting policies to reduce emissions now. If the Scottish Government chooses to align its Carbon Budgets with the UK Government it should plan an interim budget so they can begin working to reduce carbon emissions as a matter of urgency. The Scottish Government was working towards a 2030 target of 75% emissions reductions. Any carbon budgets set forth by the Scottish Government should be aiming to reach these same levels of emissions reductions as a matter of urgency. It is imperative that the Scottish Government takes forward plans to reduce carbon now – such as delivery of their 20% reduction in car-km commitment, action on heat-in-buildings and an increase in renewables. If the Scottish Government is to get serious about tackling climate change it cannot afford to wait and must prepare temporary carbon budgets that will act as a 'hold over' until the CCC publish their advice.

The Scottish Government should also prepare and publish multiple carbon budgets. As the current system of annual targets set in the 2019 Act laid a target for each year up to and including 2045, if the Scottish Government chooses to adopt carbon budgets, then so too should carbon budgets be set to provide certainty of the pathway for emissions reductions across the next 20 years. However, budgets should not stop in the year 2042 but be carried out until 2045 in line with Scotland's net-zero target.

Surpluses & Deficits

The bill as written does not provide provision for the Scottish Government to take forward any surpluses from one Carbon Budget to another. We understand the Scottish Government has advised they will not look to carry surpluses from one budget to another. It is vitally important that the bill does not permit any mechanism to carry forward any 'surplus' reductions. We understand that such a mechanism does exist within the UK Government's carbon budget system, but they have not yet used it. We also understand that the CCC advised that such mechanisms are unnecessary. Given the weakening of the 2030 target in this Bill, and the Scottish Government's aim to meet net zero by 2045 at the latest, any surplus must be 'banked' and considered an advantage in meeting the net zero goal, not used as an excuse to slow down or over pollute in subsequent years. On deficits, Section 36 of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act states that where annual targets have not been met, "Scottish Ministers must lay a report before the Scottish Parliament setting out proposals and policies to compensate in future years for the excess emissions." In practice, these reports have not been laid timeously nor policies effectively implemented to compensate for the excess emissions. Indeed, the report following the missed target announced in June 2023 has yet to be published. However, we believe this requirement should be retained and the parliament should continue thorough scrutiny of future section 36 reports.

Meeting Emissions Reductions Targets

There is a wealth of things the Scottish Government should be doing now to meet emissions reductions targets. These include:

- a comprehensive plan for reducing car km by 20% which would include cheap, readily available, comprehensive, municipally owned public transport.
- Ending subsidies for fossil fuels and ruling out new fossil fuel infrastructure – such as the damaging proposal for a new gas-fired power plant in Peterhead.
- Ending incineration in Scotland, implementing Extended Producer Responsibility and other measures to increase recycling and reduce waste.
- Countless others, most of which can be seen in the SCCS Climate Manifesto:
<https://www.stopclimatechaos.scot/manifesto/>

Conclusion

Scotland is in this situation because the Scottish Government have failed to act to tackle the climate crisis. They have dealt with the easy, low hanging fruit, and failed to act on any of the more difficult areas. If this legislation is to pass, the Scottish Government must:

- Not weaken the 2045 Net Zero Target
- Not weaken the level of action required for targets/ carbon budgets i.e. if switching to carbon budgets, the emissions reduction for the last year in a budget must not be lower than the annual target set for that year in the 2019 Act.
- Establish and publish a pathway to meeting the above target
- Recognise that early, radical action is necessary and deliver it.
- Provide for regular monitoring, reporting and scrutiny of progress.

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