



UNISON Scotland response:

Scottish Parliament Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee Call for Written Views: Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Bill

August 2018

Introduction

UNISON is Scotland's largest trade union with members across the public, private and voluntary sectors. Our members have many roles in which climate change impacts on their specific work, as well as the ways in which it does for everyone – at work and at home. We have members working for the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (e.g. protecting our rivers, land and the air we breathe), in environmental health, collecting household and business waste, ensuring new buildings meet stricter environmental and energy efficiency targets, providing healthy, sustainable food to school children and hospital patients, and in a myriad other ways, including with Scottish Water, providing clean, safe water for home, work and industry. Also, members support our International Committee and Green Network promoting climate action and climate justice, locally, nationally and internationally. We welcome the opportunity to respond to the call for views on the general principles of the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Bill.

As members of the Stop Climate Chaos Scotland Coalition¹ (SCCS) and the Just Transition Partnership² (JTP), we support both their responses to the Committee's call for views and we quote from these where relevant.

Advice of the Committee on Climate Change, Consultation, Scope of the Bill

UNISON believes that the Scottish Government is not being ambitious enough in this Bill to comply with the Paris Agreement. Nor is it credibly maintaining the 'world leading' status Scotland earned with its 2009 legislation. Online investigative journalism platform The Ferret reported in a June 'Fact Check' that claims by the SNP that the new Bill would set the toughest emissions targets in the world were false³.

Encouragingly, momentum for net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 is building in Scotland (including with a commitment from Scottish Labour, while the Scottish Greens want even tougher action), at UK level (including a campaign backed by more than 100 MPs from across all parties) and internationally. Scotland is in danger of being left behind many other countries and failing to do our fair share, if the Bill is not strengthened.

As a headline in late August said, 'The world is finally waking up to climate change.'⁴ The need for countries to act to deliver on Paris Agreement commitments has been brought starkly home with Scotland's heat wave earlier in the summer part of rising temperatures

¹ www.stopclimatechaos.org

² UNISON is part of the Just Transition Partnership with the STUC, sister unions Unite Scotland, UCU Scotland, CWU Scotland and PCS Scotland, and Friends of the Earth Scotland and WWF Scotland.

³ <https://theferret.scot/scotlands-climate-targets-toughest-world/>

⁴ www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/aug/17/world-waking-up-to-reality-climate-change-hothouse-earth-author

worldwide. We have seen devastating wildfires, flooding and other 'climate chaos' around the globe and now unprecedented breaking up of the strongest Arctic sea ice. UNISON believes that these dramatic and dangerous examples of the impact of climate change very visibly strengthen the already convincing case for the new Climate Bill to have tougher targets, with strong policies required to ensure they are achieved.

The advice of the Committee on Climate Change (CCC) is due to be updated, following the October publication of the Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C by the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The Scottish Government makes much of relying on the advice of the CCC. As SCCS says in its submission, the CCC advice in early 2017 on a 90% target was based on 2015 advice to the UK Government. Since then, we have falling costs and new technologies, combined with increasing numbers of countries committing to net zero targets for 2050. It seems likely that updated CCC assessments of anticipated feasibility will provide support for more ambitious targets. We urge the Committee to do all in its power to ensure the Scottish Government and CCC make the new CCC advice available urgently, certainly in time for proper understanding and scrutiny of it during the progress of the Bill. Such crucial information must be part of the parliamentary scrutiny. It would be irresponsible for MSPs to be asked to make decisions without the advice. Clearly, there will also be a range of other advice and scientific evidence and assessments which MSPs should also take into account. The SCCS response cites a new study calculating Scotland's fair contribution to tackling climate change, as enshrined in the Paris Agreement. It concludes that reaching net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 at the latest is both possible and necessary.

UNISON asks Committee members to support the SCCS call for a target of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 at the latest and an interim target of 77% emissions reduction on 1990 levels by 2030. These have overwhelming public support, as evidenced by the responses to the Scottish Government consultation on the Bill. SCCS's detailed response includes commentary and a range of proposals for the Bill and relevant policies. Along with SCCS, the JTP and others, we believe the Bill should be amended not just on targets and process, but to include key policy drivers that will help ensure targets are met. Among the most important amendments will be establishing a statutory Just Transition Commission in the Bill, along with a commitment to a Just Transition approach to the delivery of targets, protecting workers' livelihoods and enhancing social justice. There should also be Just Transition reporting requirements in the Climate Change Plan.

The Bill:

In calling for the Committee to support the above targets and all the SCCS proposals, we wish to stress just how crucial the Just Transition approach is to the success of action on climate change. We believe commitment to this must be a key part of the Bill.

The very welcome Scottish Government decision to set up a Just Transition Commission should be delivered by establishing the Commission on a statutory basis in the Bill. The Commission should be long-term, not a short-life advisory body. Its role will be essential

throughout the duration of the climate targets laid out in the Bill as it will help drive the changes needed. The Just Transition approach, one of equity, will also help in public engagement, by genuinely including workers, their trade unions, communities and the general public in making the transition to a low carbon economy a fair one. Implemented properly in this way, it would also be genuinely world leading.

As members know, the Just Transition approach is included in the Preamble of the Paris Agreement. Ambitious targets are essential to Scotland taking responsibility for our fair share of international efforts to limit temperature increases to 1.5°C. But achieving the targets must not be at the expense of the workforce and communities which currently extract or depend upon the use of fossil fuels. The JTP says that a Just Transition means moving to a modern low-carbon economy in a way which protects workers' livelihoods, creates a new base and delivers a fairer Scotland. We must not have a repeat of the kind of devastation of communities that happened with the closure of coal mines. Planning for a fair transition means that the costs and rewards of the switch to a low carbon economy are shared, with protections and support for redeployment and re-training and other help for those whose jobs are at risk or will change. Investment is a key part of this and Scotland lost out by not doing more to secure good quality manufacturing and engineering jobs as part of the expansion of renewable energy. A Just Transition approach would involve planning ahead, to invest in the industry, avoiding the kinds of problems that hit BiFab⁵ to devastating effect.

Another very important SCCS ask for the Bill is for future finance budgets to be consistent with the climate targets. We want to see not just more transparency, with clearer reading across budgets and climate plans to enable proper scrutiny. The Bill should include a duty to create a statutory Zero-Carbon Infrastructure Commission, with responsibilities for advising the Scottish Government of the major infrastructure projects that are needed for Scotland to achieve its zero carbon ambitions, and analysing the Scottish Government's capital budgets to ensure that they are aligned with meeting climate targets.

Bill: Implementation, Actions & Behaviours Change, Target Setting Criteria

A strong economic and industrial strategy is essential to planning the Just Transition across the whole economy. The coming new Scottish National Investment Bank has an important role to play in supporting the transition, with that as a core part of its remit. We also welcome the proposal for a new publicly owned energy company. Extending public ownership within the energy system will help tackle both climate change and fuel poverty. The new company should embark on generation and transmission, as well as supply. We want to see greater encouragement of municipal energy and community energy schemes. Energy efficiency measures will support delivery of targets on fuel poverty as well as climate, and will create jobs. We urge the Committee to back the SCCS call for the Bill to set a target for all homes to be at least an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) Band C by 2025. The Government's recently published 'Energy Efficiency Scotland: Route Map', sets

⁵ <https://scottishtuc.blog/2018/06/04/the-offshore-horizon-unions-and-the-future-of-oil-and-gas/>

an EPC C objective for all homes for 2040, but this is too late for both climate change and fuel poverty purposes. Parliament has already voted in support of a 2030 objective.

The transport sector must do far more to contribute to climate targets. There is a strong need for much improved public transport. We support public ownership models to help create the transition more quickly than at present. We also want to see, across policies, more done to assess the health, wellbeing, reducing inequalities and preventive spend benefits of a range of policies, such as would be seen in improved quality of life and reduced health spending on obesity or asthma through increasing active travel and tackling air pollution. As SCCS says, public health should be in the target setting criteria.

Food policy is another area where we need far more action on reducing emissions. We urge the Scottish Government to bring forward the promised Good Food Nation Bill. With the Scottish Food Coalition (which is working for a Just Transition to a fair, healthy and sustainable food system), we want to see the promised consultation soon on this important cross-cutting legislation. UNISON hopes Committee members can support this as being important to meeting climate targets, as well as the many health, diet, social justice, economic and other benefits identified by the coalition in the potential for such a Bill.

In so many areas, it is vital that the public sector leads, and leads by example, reducing its own carbon footprint. We applaud the recent move to mandatory annual reporting by public bodies on their climate change duties and await the results of the review of the duties being carried out this year by the Scottish Government. We believe the work done by councils, health boards and other public bodies is crucial to meeting Scottish climate targets and want to see sharing of good practice and innovative approaches. We reiterate our public engagement proposal for public bodies to present reports to groups such as school children, inviting the younger generation to quiz councillors and/or officials or other representatives on what is being done locally to cut emissions. It is their future.

Conclusion

The Committee has immense power to do the right thing on tackling climate change. If members want to ensure Scotland continues to be a world leader, please support the SCCS and JTP proposals to strengthen the Bill. We owe it to current and future generations to do our fair share to implement the Paris Agreement.

For further information, please contact:

Dave Watson,
Head of Policy and Public Affairs
d.watson@unison.co.uk

Fiona Montgomery,
Information Development Officer
f.montgomery@unison.co.uk

Mike Kirby, Scottish Secretary
UNISON Scotland, UNISON House, 14, West Campbell Street, Glasgow,
G2 6RX