

Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Bill: Stage 3 Amendments Briefing

INTRODUCTION

Scottish Environment LINK is the forum for Scotland's voluntary environment community, with over 35 member bodies representing a broad spectrum of environmental interests with the common goal of contributing to a more environmentally sustainable society.

This briefing sets out our views with respect to required amendments to ensure that the Climate Bill delivers robust action to address the twin climate and nature emergencies. LINK is supportive of the Bill being passed to update Scotland's existing emissions reduction targets. The recent Programme for Government has made several commitments to strengthen Scotland's ambition on climate change, including setting addressing the climate emergency as the mission of the Scottish National Investment Bank and regional land use plans. LINK believes there is potential for some of these commitments to be given a legislative underpinning by including them in the Climate Change Bill, particularly those commitments that relate to the land use sector and delivering multiple benefits for nature, climate and farmers.

Scottish Environment LINK members support the following changes to the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Bill:

- Stating the importance of limiting global temperature rise to 1.5°C.
- Strengthening Scotland's Land Use Strategy.
- Support for climate-friendly agriculture.
- Introducing a nitrogen balance sheet for Scotland.
- Committing to policies and proposals to enhance blue carbon storage.

LINK supports the following Stage 3 amendments in the Bill:

- Limiting global temperature rise to 1.5°C - amendment 1 (Angus MacDonald)
- Strengthening the Land Use Strategy - amendment 25 (Claudia Beamish)
- Establishing regional land use partnerships - amendment 27 (Claudia Beamish)
- Establishing an Agricultural Modernisation Fund – amendment 33 (Maurice Golden)
- A nitrogen balance sheet for Scotland - amendment 23 (Maurice Golden)
- Marine carbon storage - amendment 29 (Mark Ruskell) and, should this pass, amendment 32 (Maurice Golden)

We also support the amendments highlighted in the Stop Climate Chaos Scotland Stage 3 briefing.

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1. LIMITING GLOBAL TEMPERATURE RISE TO 1.5°C

The risks from climate change will be significantly reduced if global temperature rise is limited to 1.5°C.¹ IPCC's (2018) Special Report² highlighted the considerable risks to our global environment, economy and society arising from 2°C and 1.5°C warming scenarios. In particular, the report outlined the different impacts on ecosystems, habitats and species that would occur under 2°C and 1.5°C pathways, with the risks being significantly lower if global temperature rise is limited to 1.5°C warming.

Earlier this year, the LINK-WWF *Scotland's Nature on Red Alert*³ report highlighted that Scotland's biodiversity is already experiencing the effects of climate change at 1°C warming, and warned that this impact would be deeper should warming in Scotland exceed 1.5°C. LINK has previously emphasized the importance of limiting warming to 1.5°C.⁴ During Stage 2⁵ LINK supported establishing 1.5°C as a target-setting criterion.

- **LINK supports amendment 1 (Angus MacDonald)** which requires estimates to be made of the contribution of Scotland's net-zero and interim targets to international efforts to limit global average temperature rise to 1.5°C.

2. LAND USE STRATEGY

A key component of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, was recognising the potential of Scottish Land Use Strategy in addressing climate change through mitigation and adaptation. LINK has previously⁶ highlighted the need to strengthen strategic implementation of the Land Use Strategy, and supported amendments on the creation of regional land use partnerships and frameworks during Stage 2⁴ of the Bill.

LINK welcomes that the Scottish Government has considered the recommendation of the Committee on Climate Change (CCC) that land use is a key area of achieving net-zero emission reduction⁷, by making commitments within the 2019-2020 Programme for Government⁸. It is hoped these commitments that seek to 'maximise the potential' and explore how the Land Use Strategy could support climate action are adopted into the final Bill as amendments.

¹ IPCC (2018) Special Report: Global Warming of 1.5°C <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>

² IPCC (2018) Special Report: Global Warming of 1.5°C <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>

³ LINK-WWF (2019): Scotland's nature on red alert: http://www.scotlink.org/wp/files/documents/Scotlands_Nature_Red_Alert.pdf

⁴ LINK Parliamentary Briefing (2019) http://www.scotlink.org/wp/files/Parliamentary-Briefing_Nature-on-Red-Alert_final.pdf

⁵ LINK Stage 2 briefing on Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets)(Scotland)Bill: <http://www.scotlink.org/wp/files/documents/LINK-Climate-Bill-briefing-on-Stage-2-amendments.pdf>

⁶ LINK evidence on Stage 1 of Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets)(Scotland)Bill: <http://www.scotlink.org/wp/files/documents/Scottish-Environment-LINK-ECCLR-Stage-1-Evidence-Climate-Bill-Aug2018.pdf>

⁷ Committee on Climate Change (2019): Net Zero: The UK's contribution to stopping global warming <https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/net-zero-the-uks-contribution-to-stopping-global-warming/>

⁸ Protecting Scotland's Future: the Government's Programme for Scotland 2019-2020 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/protecting-scotlands-future-governments-programme-scotland-2019-20/>

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- **LINK supports amendment 25 (Claudia Beamish)** which seeks to facilitate progress in delivering the Land Use Strategy by introducing regular reporting requirements.

LINK welcomes the commitments made in the 2019-2020 Programme for Government to produce regional land use plans to maximise the contribution of Scotland's land to the fight against climate change but believe that this commitment needs to be done on a legislative basis.

- **LINK supports amendment 27 (Claudia Beamish)** which requires Scottish Ministers to set out policies and proposals for establishment of regional land use partnerships in the Climate Change Plan, including supporting and resourcing.

3. CLIMATE-FRIENDLY AGRICULTURE POLICIES

Agriculture and related land use are responsible for around one quarter of Scottish greenhouse gas emissions. At present there is no specific funding to support farmers with the upfront costs of adopting measures to mitigate emissions.

- **LINK supports amendment 33 (Maurice Golden)** which would require the Climate Change Plan to set out proposals and policies regarding the establishment of an Agricultural Modernisation Fund, which builds on a Programme for Government commitment to consider funding considerations of an Agricultural Transformation Programme. The Fund proposed would support the agricultural sector in upfront costs of mitigation measures that would improve both efficiency and economic output.

4. NITROGEN BALANCE SHEET

A nitrogen balance sheet would contribute to Scotland's circular economy and emissions ambitions by ensuring that nitrogen is used efficiently across all sectors, recycled optimally and that waste is minimised.

- Alongside SCCS, **LINK supports amendment 23 (Maurice Golden)** which sets out the creation of a nitrogen balance sheet to calculate Scotland's nitrogen flows across all sectors of the economy, imposing a duty on Scottish Ministers to monitor and report on nitrogen use efficiency.

5. BLUE CARBON

There is huge potential for Scotland's marine features - from sea grasses and kelp to sands and sediments - to naturally sequester and store greenhouse gases. Scotland's marine carbon stores (also known as blue carbon) have the potential to naturally store an estimated 7.2 Mt organic carbon and 0.44 Mt inorganic carbon per year in Scotland's marine sediments, which is equivalent to 28.2 Mt

carbon emissions annually (equivalent to 52% of 2011 CO₂ emissions in Scotland).⁹ The current Climate Change Plan acknowledges the importance of blue carbon and outlines the research taking place to evidence its potential. However, given the climate emergency, it is important to commit to action and outline policies for protecting and enhancing our natural blue carbon stores in future Climate Change Plans.

- **LINK strongly supports amendment 29 (Mark Ruskell)** which requires Scottish Ministers to include policies and proposals to protect and enhance the natural sequestration and storage of carbon. LINK strongly agrees that policies and proposals to enhance nature-based sequestration of marine carbon by marine habitats should be developed through marine plans and other wider seas measures for all suitable sites within the Scottish marine area and therefore strongly supports amendment 29.

- **As an additional step, and only if amendment 29 (Mark Ruskell) is passed, LINK is supportive of amendment 32 (Maurice Golden) as an additional step to enhance natural blue carbon storage.** This amendment focuses on marine carbon within Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) while amendment 29 covers the entire Scottish marine area as defined in section 1 of the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010. LINK agrees that additional measures within MPAs should also be supported but only if the following conditions are met:
 - Amendment 32 is limited to supporting natural sequestration of carbon in marine environment by marine habitats and does not cover anthropogenic carbon capture and storage beneath the seabed, which is another consideration entirely.
 - Amendment 29 in the name of Mark Ruskell is passed, ensuring that amendment 32 is an additional step to protect and enhance natural blue carbon.

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⁹ Burrows M.T., et al (2014): Assessment of carbon budgets and potential blue carbon stores in Scotland's coastal and marine environment. Scottish Natural Heritage Commissioned Report No. 761

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