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CHURCH AND SOCIETY COUNCIL**

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## Official Response

**SUBJECT:** Climate Change (Scotland) Bill  
**REQUESTED BY:** Transport Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee, The  
Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP  
**REFERENCE:** OR - 04 - 09  
**DATE:** 27 February 2009



## **CLIMATE CHANGE (SCOTLAND) BILL**

### **Submission by the Church of Scotland to the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee of the Scottish Parliament**

#### **Introduction**

**1. The Church of Scotland welcomes the Climate Change (Scotland) Bill and endorses the proposal to cut emissions of greenhouse gases by 80% by 2050.**

2. For the Church of Scotland climate change is primarily an ethical issue and our interest in the bill is in its overall impact and its implementation rather than in the technical detail. However the Church of Scotland is a member of the Stop Climate Chaos coalition and supports the submission made by the coalition covering technical aspects of the bill (see appendix below). This submission is therefore confined to those questions that deal with broader issues. These are primarily questions 1-3, 7-9, 12, 13, and 20.

#### **The Ethical Imperative**

3. The church's position is summarised by the following statement.

*The Church of Scotland is concerned that climate change poses a serious and immediate threat to people everywhere, particularly to the poor of the earth; and that climate change represents a failure in our stewardship of God's creation. We accept the need to reduce the emissions of greenhouse gases urgently to avoid dangerous and irreversible climate change; and to promote a more equitable and sustainable use of energy.*

4. For these reasons we strongly support the Bill and the contribution it can make to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Although Scotland is responsible for a small share of global greenhouse gas emissions the example it sets through this legislation is admirable and the Scottish Parliament and Government are to be commended in jointly bringing forward this Bill.

#### **Public Involvement, Engagement and Commitment**

5. Our main concern is whether people in Scotland feel involved, engaged and committed to the legislation. The evidence from meetings with eco-congregations around Scotland is that many people are concerned about climate change and its impact but few people are aware of the Bill or how it might affect them. In the face of other more immediate and pressing demands in their lives most people tend to forget about climate change. Climate change is of general concern to many people but when major proposals arise such as the development of a new luxury golf course or a new bridge over the Forth the lure of new development is usually more powerful than concerns about climate change.

6. The importance of public engagement and support was highlighted in the debate on the Eco-Congregation Scotland programme held in the Scottish Parliament on 19 December 2008. Members contributing to the debate identified the importance of community involvement and how congregations can lead community responses to climate change. The Minister for the Environment, Michael Russell, identified that communication, along with mitigation and adaptation is one of the three aims of the Government's climate change programme. We therefore believe that if it is to be effective the Bill should include provisions to require the Scottish Government to promote public awareness about the legislation and its targets; and to promote public involvement and engagement in meeting those targets.

### **Overall targets (Questions 1-3)**

7. The Church of Scotland strongly supports the target of an 80% reduction in greenhouse gases by 2050. However the evidence from meetings with eco-congregations, presbyteries and other groups, is that this target is too large and too remote for most people to understand. Faced with such a distant and such a huge target people tend to recoil from the challenge. To aid understanding and engagement short term targets are essential. In meetings with eco-congregations we have identified that an annual target of 5% a year is helpful and generally welcomed by congregations as being challenging but realistic.

8. This approach was agreed unanimously by the General Assembly 2008 in response to a deliverance proposed by the Iona Community in 2008 and is now being used by Eco-Congregation Scotland as a target for eco-congregations across Scotland. This experience is relevant to the Bill. A target reduction of 5% each year is consistent with the 80% target by 2050 and would help deliver on this. As a tool of public engagement and involvement short term targets will be useful, if not essential, to help the Government move forward.

### **Reporting duties (Question 7)**

9. The clauses on reporting duties need to be stronger to require the Scottish Government to set out how it has provided advice and information to the public, how effective that advice and information has been; and how it has promoted engagement and involvement in the delivery of targets. If the Government is not effective in this regard the Bill is likely to fail in its purpose. By way of example consider the impact of legislation that has been successful: the Smoking, Health and Social Care (Scotland) Act 2005. This legislation introduced the smoking ban that led to immediate and significant behaviour change in Scotland, change that has had a huge and positive health impact. The context of the Act was different and the requirement it made of people was very specific, but it would not have been successful without a government led campaign of advice and involvement, including a nationwide consultation exercise.

10. On the other hand there are other examples of legislation that warn what might happen if the Bill fails to achieve public support. The UK Equal Pay Act of 1970 sought to secure equal pay for men and women, yet nearly 40 years after its enactment there is still public debate and legal action surrounding its implementation. In both the public sector and in business equal pay has not been clearly and unequivocally achieved. We cannot afford to be in this position in 40 years time with climate change. The uptake and effective implementation of the legislation must be immediate if it is to be effective. And for this to happen one of the preconditions is

widespread public acceptance and involvement. The Bill needs to embody this requirement and it may be that this section is an appropriate place to do this.

### **Duties of public bodies relating to climate change (Question 8)**

11. Duties on public involvement and engagement could usefully be extended to all relevant public bodies. Local authorities and community planning partnerships in particular have a duty under best value to promote public engagement in their policy planning process and have now developed substantial experience and expertise in implementing this duty. They could take on public engagement on climate change issues relatively easily and play a major role in helping the government implement its proposals. Churches, congregations and other voluntary organisations could also play an important role and it would be helpful for the legislation to embody a requirement for public bodies to engage with voluntary organisations in the delivery of this duty.

### **Adaptation (Question 9)**

12. As with mitigation, communities will have to be at the centre of strategies to promote adaptation. In its response to the Scottish Government consultation document on adaptation the Church of Scotland identified the importance of the Scottish government supporting communities across Scotland to help them formulate their own response to climate change. This would lead to consideration of the role of education; community learning and development; and of community and voluntary organisations. In this context the Climate Challenge Fund is an example of how the Government can reach out to voluntary organisations and help them engage in the action to respond to climate change. The Bill could include more specific reference to the need to engage with communities in developing programmes for adaptation; along the same lines as those suggested for mitigation above.

### **Energy efficiency (Questions 12-13)**

13. The promotion of energy efficiency is a crucial response to climate change and the clauses are welcomed. However it may be appropriate to relate these duties to the need to tackle fuel poverty as the two issues are closely related. It might be appropriate for the bill to require the Government to take on a more specific duty to promote energy efficiency and tackle fuel poverty by including targets that will lead to a systematic improvement of the housing stock and to reduce the proportion of the population living in fuel poverty. Such targets would be challenging and would need to be supported by a substantial budget to be effective, but would lead to a measurable reduction in carbon emissions and of fuel poverty.

### **General issues (Question 20)**

14. In conclusion, the Church reasserts both the importance of the legislation and its impact on people across Scotland. In the coming century *climate change will change lives* and while technical measures contained in the Bill are important, first and foremost, people across Scotland need to be engaged and committed to the challenge of responding to climate change. The Bill must therefore seek to involve and engage people and communities and set out clearly how the Government will be expected to do this.

## Appendix

### Stop Climate Chaos

Stop Climate Chaos Scotland is a coalition of more than 30 organisations campaigning together to tackle climate change. The coalition members include environment and development NGOs, faith groups, trade unions, community councils, student societies, women's organisations, a mental health charity, and many others. In Scotland, the members have a combined supporter base of over 1.5 million people.

The Stop Climate Chaos Coalition Scotland priorities for the Climate Change (Scotland) Bill are that it must:

1. Set out a framework that will achieve *at least* an 80% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.
2. Establish in statute annual emission reductions of *at least* 3% year-on-year from the start, not just from 2020, compatible with a fair and safe cumulative budget identified by the advisory body (see 4).
3. Include emissions from all sectors in the framework and targets set out in the Bill, including those from international aviation and shipping, from the very start.
4. Establish a Scottish advisory body, a Scottish Climate Change Commission, in the primary legislation to support delivery of the Bill when it is enacted.
5. Ensure that at least 80% of the effort to cut emissions takes place in Scotland.
6. Establish duties on all public bodies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in line with the national target.
7. Set in place robust, transparent reporting measures so the Scottish Parliament is well informed on progress in meeting targets and Government is held to account on mitigation and adaptation.
8. Ensure that strong enforcement measures are set in place in statute.
9. Ensure Scotland counts all its emissions and reports on those produced by products and services we consume as well as emissions produced domestically.
10. Be explicit that sustainable development is core to the purpose and delivery of the statute in relation to mitigation and adaptation.

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