



Briefing 07/28 April 2007

Changing Our Ways

To: All Chief Executives, Main Contacts and Email Contacts (Scotland)

CC: All Chief Executives, Main Contacts (England, Northern Ireland and Wales)

Scotland's Climate Change Programme in conjunction with the Scottish Executive

Key issues

As a result of our climate changing, this is proving to be one of the most serious threats facing our planet.

Scotland is already feeling the effects and the Executive are suggesting possible ways in which this country can help slow down the process.

Changes in daily lifestyles can make a big difference to ensure Scotland does its bit to tackle climate change.

1. Introduction

Climate change is one of the most serious threats facing the world today. Scientific evidence that the global climate is changing and that the primary cause for this change is the release of greenhouse gases from human activity is compelling. Without a concerted global effort to curb the emissions of these harmful gases to ensure Scotland lives within environmental limits, climate change will cause devastation across the world. The full report can be found at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/topics/environment/climate-change>

2. Background

Our planet is surrounded by a blanket of greenhouse gases which keep the surface of the earth warm enough to sustain life. But this blanket is getting thicker, trapping in too much heat, resulting in what is referred to as the Greenhouse Effect. This is happening because we are releasing greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide by burning fossil fuels like coal, oil and gas for energy in our homes and for transport.

3. Will climate change affect Scotland?

Whilst it is the world's poor, in the developing world, which will be most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, Scotland is already feeling the effects. Winter storms have doubled in frequency over the last 50 years, and many experts believe that by the end of this century Scotland will have warmer, wetter winters, with less snowfall and increased levels of flooding. Tourism in Scotland could become a thing of the past and skiing could be affected due to the threat of up to 90% less snowfall. Some changes to the climate are inevitable- even if greenhouse gases were stopped from being released into the atmosphere, there would still be a delay between when they are emitted and when the impact would be felt. However, everything needs to be done in order to avoid further changes and to adapt to the new situation in which the world finds itself.

4. What role can Scotland play in dealing with climate change?

APSE welcomes this report as it reaffirms the involvement by the Scottish Executive in highlighting the effects felt by climate change and the possibility of a bleak future if Scotland does not adapt to change. Scotland is contributing less harmful emissions to the world-wide problem than many other developed countries-around 0.2% of global greenhouse gases-but, on balance, each person in Scotland contributes twice the global average.

APSE would urge councils to analyse both sets of results to determine the reasons for the apparent growing gap in perception of services. It is well highlighted that rich nations have contributed most to the problem and, as a wealthy country, Scotland has a responsibility to do its bit to help tackle climate change; with individuals, households, business, community groups, the voluntary sector and local and central government all required to join the effort. In short, we are all part of the problem and therefore, must all be part of the solution. By working together, the Executive believes that a difference can be made, and progress is being recognised:

- Greenhouse gas emissions fell by 10% between 1990 and 2003

- Carbon dioxide emissions over the same period fell by more than any other UK country – 8%
- The level of carbon removed from the atmosphere by soil and trees – the carbon sink – increased by 20% between 1990 and 2003
- Taking account of the carbon sink, Scotland’s greenhouse gas emissions in 2003 were 14% lower than they were in 1990

Encouraging as these figures are, there is still a long way to go. Currently Scotland underperformed on the greenhouse gas emissions compared with the UK, although counterbalanced with this is the fact that carbon emissions was fell by more than other countries. Like the UK Government, the Scottish Executive has reviewed its strategy for tackling climate change and aims to cut harmful emissions through its own developed policies. APSE welcomes the Executive’s commitment to tackling the issue and securing a safer, sustainable future for Scotland, by:

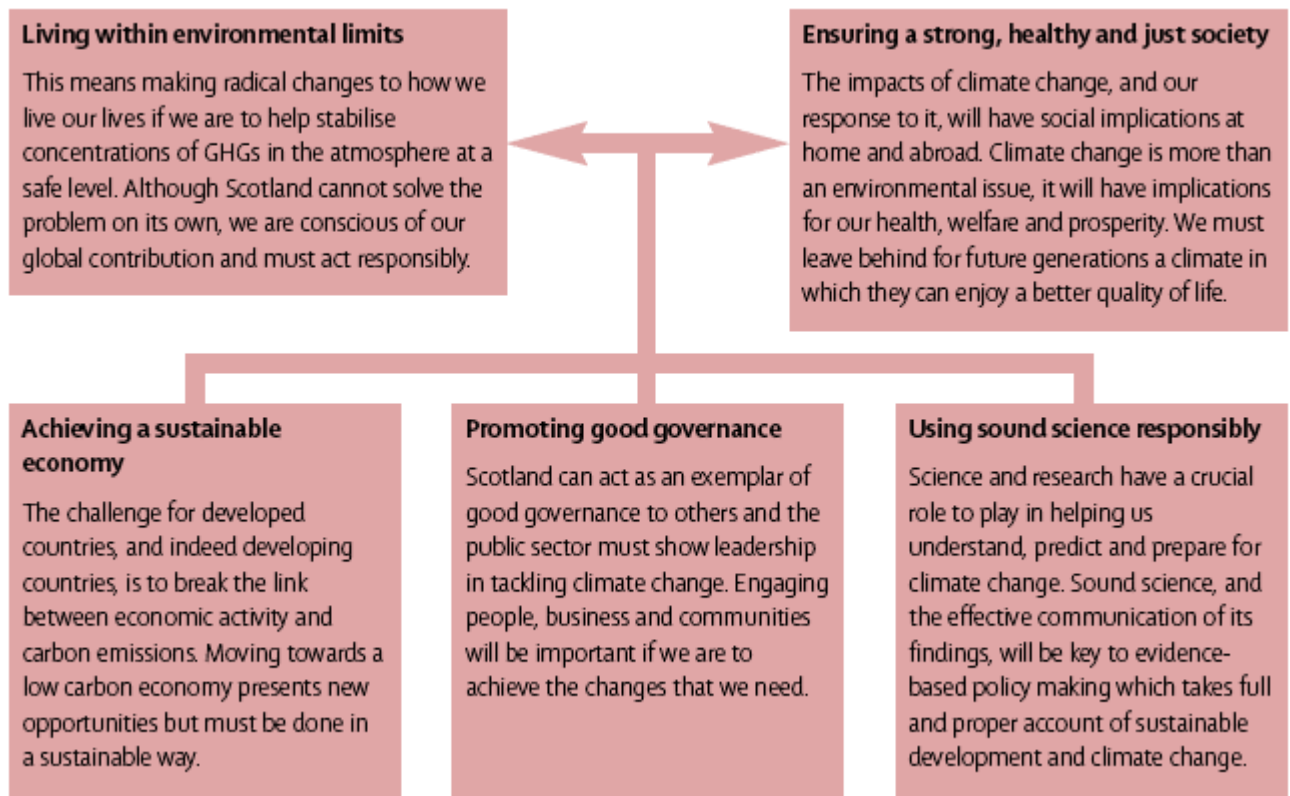
- Encouraging more efficient use of energy by the public and Scottish businesses, while increasing “greener” renewable sources of electricity and heat such as wind, wave, tidal, biomass (such as wood) and solar power
- Supporting activities which promote new and cleaner vehicle technology and fuel, while urging the public to consider alternatives to driving cars (public transport, walking or cycling)
- Delivering significant carbon savings from Scotland’s forests by increasing forest cover and through using more wood as fuel instead of fossil fuels
- Promoting waste recycling initiatives – both household and business waste under the National Waste Plan, to reduce waste to landfill sites and limit emissions of methane – a powerful greenhouse gas
- Contributing to the development of a UK – wide policy framework on preparing for climate change to ensure Scotland is protected from the worst impacts.

The UK has an international target (under the Kyoto agreement) to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 12.5% by 2008/12. It also has two more ambitious domestic goals – to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 20% by 2010 and to reduce them by 60% by around 2050. To ensure that a fair contribution is made to these UK commitments up to 2010 local authorities must make sure that the Scottish Executive policies save a fair share of total carbon savings from equivalent policies across the rest of the UK. This amount of carbon is called the Scottish Share. See also briefing 07/20 on the Draft Climate Change Bill which provides the UK perspective on the issues.

The executive has set an ambitious target to do even more by exceeding this share by 1 million tones of carbon savings – a big overachievement of the Scottish Share. This

is the first the Executive has identified Scotland’s fair share of UK carbon savings and the first time it has set a Scottish climate change target. Together, they show how Scotland will continue to make a lasting difference to the bigger picture.

Guiding principles for sustainable development and climate change:



Scottish Executive 1/8/06(Changing our Ways: Scotland’s Climate Change Programme)

5. Conclusion/ How can I make a difference?

Every individual, household, business and, ultimately every country consumes resources. The carbon footprint measures the amount of resources used compared with what is available in the world. It provides information on the kind of mark being left on the planet. The Scottish footprint is too big as more is being used. By measuring this and managing the resources in a more environmentally friendly way, it may provide Scotland with a greater understanding that everyday actions may have on the climate.

Local Authorities and Scotland’s population have a role to play in choosing the future. There are many ways to can tackle climate change, with many bringing other benefits, such as new jobs, improved local environments and economic growth. Changes in daily lifestyles can make a big difference and ensure Scotland does its bit to tackle climate change. It is hoped Scotland’s response to this will be characterised by:

- Developing a transparent approach and an open and inclusive process
- Integrating climate change routinely into policy development across all sectors and at all levels;

- Achieving Scotland's contribution in the most sustainable way - considering the wider environmental, social and economic implications of different courses of action;
- Influencing and contributing to UK, European and global efforts to respond and adapt to climate change where Scotland's participation can add most to the process;
- Combining both demand management (reduced energy consumption and increased efficiency of use) and supply side measures (low carbon options including fuel mix and renewables);
- Maximising opportunities for both mitigation and adaptation (e.g. green jobs, technology development, renewables, biomass, sustainable flood management) - and making the most of Scotland's strengths;
- Leading the public sector, visibly and by example - doing and communicating best practice to others;
- Overcoming the inertia - everyone making the connection between daily life choices and climate change, and having options to act accordingly; and
- Increasing the momentum, capacity building, monitoring, reporting and feedback.

APSE believes in the ability of local government and its public partners to drive forward change and improvement from within. Ways in which local government can influence emissions of greenhouse gases include management of corporate resources, procurement policies, public transport provision, housing energy management, promotion of renewable energy through protection and enhancement of carbon sinks. Scotland awaits with great interest any further proposals which are intended to aid in this process and will be working in close partnership with members to ensure that first class local public services remain the highest priority for all, whilst attempting to tackle the carbon footprint. Perhaps the main issue to contend with at the moment is the belief that every one of us has the ability to change the future.

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