



Stop Climate Chaos Scotland

Briefing: UKCCC net-zero report and implications for Scotland's climate bill

A briefing for the ECCLR Committee ahead of evidence from the CCC

May 2019

Summary

- SCCS welcomes the CCC advice on net-zero, which states that a 2045 net-zero target for Scotland is “necessary, feasible and cost-effective” and technically possible
- We note that the CCC were unable to undertake detailed analysis on Scotland's 2030 target, we urge the committee to explore a stronger 2030 target in the Bill
- We welcome the immediate cross-party commitments to take forward the CCC advice, and to put a net-zero target for 2045 at the latest into the Climate Change Bill
- The work to deliver net-zero needs to start now - the CCC are clear that policy effort must be ramped up across the board, and a state of ‘climate emergency’ must mean policies are included in the Climate Bill.

We also welcome that the CCC report takes into account the historical climate debt that Scotland and the UK owe to the rest of the world, unlike previous advice based on per-capita calculations. The report rightly calculates what Scotland can do beyond average global action in light of its historical responsibility to this crisis. SCCS also welcome that this report demonstrates the financial achievability of these targets, and clearly acknowledges that action is, both environmentally and financially, preferable to inaction.

In our press release responding to the CCC advice, SCCS board member Mike Robinson said:

“It's great to see the Scottish Government responding to today's advice and committing to net-zero by 2045. As the First Minister recognised last weekend, we are in the grip of a climate emergency and those at the frontline are already suffering. Enshrining this commitment in law puts Scotland amongst the leading group of nations in the world in terms of ambition on climate change, but should now be followed by accelerated immediate action across the board.”

“Rapidly growing public concern about climate change is sending a strong message to all politicians that rhetoric alone isn't enough and has to be matched with swift and decisive action. It's now up to MSPs to show they are listening to public concern by strengthening the Climate Bill to urgently ramp up policy action now and over the next decade. Tackling climate change is our moral obligation, but this report shows it is also possible and affordable. We know we can build on early progress to deliver. It means huge benefits such as warmer homes, cleaner air, better health, skilled jobs and a flourishing countryside and can be done in fair way that enhances the lives of workers and communities across Scotland.”

Net-zero by 2045

The CCC report a net-zero target for Scotland by 2045 is technically possible, “based on current consumer behaviours and known technologies, with prudent assumptions over cost reduction”, and emphasises that the judgements made in its approach “are deliberately cautious”. The report does

not set out a single pathway to net-zero but makes clear that their scenarios provide multiple routes to net-zero for Scotland by 2045, depending on how the development of cost reductions for different technologies occurs.

SCCS welcomes the Scottish Government acting immediately to present amendments to the Climate Change Bill to implement the net-zero advice of the CCC.

The CCC report makes clear throughout the importance of ensuring a just transition as we pursue a net zero target. SCCS (as well as the STUC and the Just Transition Partnership) calls for the Climate Change Bill to be amended to establish the Just Transition Commission on a statutory basis. It is essential to give the Commission the status and longevity required to effectively carry out an oversight and advice function for the duration of the targets laid out in the Bill.

Debate of the Climate Change Bill should now move to securing, in legislation, an increased target and the vital accelerated response that needs to occur now and over the next decade.

The work must start now

Chief Executive of the UKCCC, Chris Stark, has said that the Scottish Government *“are not doing enough to meet the present targets, never mind the new targets we are recommending.”* [1] While the report states that *“A net-zero GHG target is not credible unless policy is ramped up significantly. Most sectors will need to reduce emissions close to zero without offsetting.”*

It is clear that we must urgently increase policy action across the board. We welcome the First Minister’s announcement that a revised climate change plan will be brought forward within six months of the Climate Bill receiving Royal Assent. However, with the acknowledgement that we are facing a climate emergency the drive to introduce new policy action should not be left on hold until the Climate Plan revision takes place, and every legislative opportunity should be fully taken advantage of to progress the accelerated policy action the CCC’s report sets out.

The Bill is also an opportunity to cement political buy-in to policy change from across Parliament, more so than the Climate Plan which is ultimately Ministers’ responsibility. As the First Minister has said, and recent debate of Air Departure Tax has shown, there is a necessity for all political parties to review their policies in light of their commitment to net-zero. Therefore, to act on the CCC advice, and to ramp up policy effort as soon as possible, new policy action should be included in the Climate Bill itself.

2030 target

The CCC have responded to the Scottish Government’s request for interim targets with a 70% 2030 target, and 90% 2040 target. However they also make clear that they have not been able to look into actions over the next decade, as their primary focus has been on net-zero targets. The report states, *“It has not yet been possible to undertake a detailed analysis across the economy of the cost-effective path for emissions in the years prior to [net-zero] targets.”*

Therefore the 2030 70% target they have proposed for Scotland (4% more than the existing target) is not based on a comprehensive assessment, (unlike the 2045 target). The report states *“Our*

assessment of the interim targets takes the approach of drawing a straight line from emissions in 2020 to the date of net-zero.”

The IPCC have said that “the next decade is crucial” for climate action, while a report from the Tyndall centre shows that if Scotland continues on the current trajectory we would use up our fair share of the global emissions budget in less than 10 years. We know that Scotland must do more in this crucial next decade. Previous analysis by SCCS has shown that a 77% target for 2030 is reasonable based on previous CCC and Scottish Government analysis, and the most ambitious but credible sectoral ‘envelopes’ used in their analysis.

While we look forward to more comprehensive CCC advice on an updated 2030 target after the UK sixth carbon budget (which the CCC estimate as a 2020-22 timescale), this means there is a risk that in Scotland that we will face less time to achieve a bigger reduction.

SCCS is calling for a 2030 target of 80% to be set in the Bill now, and would encourage ECCLR members to consider whether Scotland has the potential to move beyond the 70% target.

ECCLR members should also explore how the CCC 70% target by 2030 relates to the principle of equity, acknowledgement of UK historical emissions (climate debt) and global average efforts to limit warming to 1.5°C. We would encourage the committee to explore whether, as the advice allows a 50% chance of meeting the Paris Agreement 1.5°C target, increasing the 2030 target would improve the chances of contributing to this target.

Policies to deliver increased ambition

SCCS has called for the Bill to be expanded to include a number of policies that would deliver stronger targets. This has been backed up by the CCC, who also call for increased policy action to deliver these targets.

Agriculture and land use

The CCC said *“low-carbon farming practices, afforestation, agroforestry and peatland restoration all have a crucial role to play in reducing emissions”*. They warned that progress in agriculture has been too slow, and suggested that policies to encourage emissions reduction in agriculture need to move beyond the current voluntary approach.

SCCS has called for the Bill to be expanded to include policies that support the agriculture sector to reduce its emissions, such as introducing nitrogen balance sheets. The committee might want to explore other measures that the CCC have factored in when assessing the role of agriculture in delivering out emission reduction targets.

Transport

Transport is now the largest source of greenhouse gases in Scotland. The CCC said that we must implement more effective policies to provide low-carbon public transport and encourage active travel.

SCCS has welcomed the reversal, announced by the Government, of the proposed cut in ADT . That may curtail increases in emissions from this part of the transport sector but is not

going to encourage decreases of such emissions. We would encourage the committee to question what other policies could be introduced to reduce transport emissions - with particular regard given to public transport and active travel.

Costs

The CCC net-zero report sets out that achieving net-zero is cost-effective, and that there will be significant and diverse benefits of the increased policy delivery towards net-zero. The CCC concludes that achieving net-zero “*can be done within the cost envelope that the Parliament has already accepted*” [2].

The CCC’s economic modelling concludes that the costs of the UK reaching net-zero by 2050 are now between 1% and 2% of GDP, the same level as the CCC had estimated in 2008 for achieving an 80% reduction by 2050. This demonstrates how rapid global action and innovation has led to dramatic falls in the costs of decarbonisation over the previous decade – the CCC say that “*the lesson of the last decade is that costs fall when there is a concerted effort to act*”.

The CCC identify a range of benefits (which it has not quantified) including benefits to human health, improved air and water quality, enhanced biodiversity, and with appropriate policy new industrial opportunities). The CCC regards that the improved quality of life benefits could on their own “*partially or possibly even fully offset the resource costs*” (i.e. 1-2% of GDP). Set against the systemic and far-reaching risks posed by climate change, the financial case in favour of action towards achieving net-zero is overwhelming.

The CCC say that the majority of GDP costs are now for the difference between an 80% reduction and achieving net-zero. With the CCC’s analysis also suggesting that key sectors may now have lower costs for decarbonising than not (for example decarbonising ground transport is now lower cost for the whole economy than persisting to 2040 with fossil fuel vehicles). Taken together, this suggests that a higher target for 2030 may be cost effective.

For more information, please contact:

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Stop Climate Chaos Scotland (SCCS) is a diverse coalition of international development and environment organisations, trade and student unions, faith and community groups. We believe that the Scottish Parliament and Government should take bold action to tackle climate change, delivering our part of the Paris Agreement and supporting climate justice around the world.

[1] Chris Stark in the Daily Record <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/politics/top-climate-change-advisor-warns-14998170>

[2] See Lord Deben quote in CCC press release <https://www.theccc.org.uk/2019/05/02/phase-out-greenhouse-gas-emissions-by-2050-to-end-uk-contribution-to-global-warming/>