



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

WWF Scotland and Scottish Land and Estates Briefing – September 2019

INTRODUCTION

The declaration of a climate emergency and policies announced in the Programme for Government— including in response to the Climate Emergency Response Group (CERG)¹ recommendations—will contribute to reducing Scotland’s emissions. The Climate Change Bill is an opportunity to further this response towards a net-zero future. Progress made so far has been welcome, but there are still gaps to be addressed at Stage 3 that would strengthen the Bill and the delivery of its targets.

Land use is a sector in which big wins can be achieved in emissions reductions in the near-term and carbon sequestration in the long-term. This requires strong leadership, support and long-term direction from the Scottish Government. The Programme for Government outlined clear commitments² to identify land use pathways to net-zero. We welcome amendments to the Bill that support these commitments.

WWF Scotland and Scottish Land & Estates jointly call on MSPs to support amendments 23, 25, 27 and 33.

AMENDMENTS

23: A Nitrogen Balance Sheet for Scotland

Nitrogen balance sheets, or nitrogen budgets, are a well-established technique for understanding how nitrogen flows through our environment across all sectors of the economy. This can be used to develop evidence-based, fair, and efficient policies to tackle hotspots of nitrogen losses, and to calculate nitrogen use efficiency – the ratio of nitrogen inputs and outputs. Unfortunately, an amendment to this effect was not brought forward at Stage 2. However, we welcomed the commitment in the Programme for Government to develop a nitrogen balance sheet for Scotland and are pleased to see this amendment come forward at Stage 3.

Why is an amendment needed?

- Excessive use of nitrogen fertiliser is one of the most pressing global environmental issues. While nitrogen is necessary for crop and animal growth, this nutrient is extremely damaging to the wider environment, to human health, and in nitrous oxide form, a potent greenhouse gas. There are many easy, cost-efficient solutions, but we are not implementing them. Scotland’s excess nitrogen (nitrogen inputs – outputs) has been rising for the last 10 years.
- Given our poor track record at tackling nitrogen pollution to date, we see a need for a nitrogen balance sheet for Scotland which allows calculation of nitrogen use efficiency. This will establish a baseline, help inform policy and show areas of improvement for industry, which in turn can promote innovation.

¹ Both SLE and WWF Scotland are members of the CERG. <https://www.wwf.org.uk/sites/default/files/2019-08/Climate%20Emergency%20Statement.pdf>

² Pages 36, 56, 57 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/protecting-scotlands-future-governments-programme-scotland-2019-20/>

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

25 and 27: Regional land use partnerships and frameworks

Amendment 25 seeks to strengthen the mandate of the land use strategy to facilitate delivery of climate change targets. Amendment 27 puts a requirement on Ministers to set out proposals and policies in the Climate Change Plan for the establishment, support and resourcing of regional land use partnerships and frameworks. Regional land use partnerships and frameworks are key for identifying land use priorities in partnership with land owners to bring multiple co-benefits, with targeted public spending to support delivery.

Why is an amendment needed?

- A requirement on Ministers to develop the Scottish Land Use Strategy (LUS) in 2011 was a key component of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, recognising the important role that land use can play in climate mitigation and adaptation. Little progress has been made on the policies and proposals contained in the revised LUS. No action plan or annual progress report has been published since 2016 and it has been under-resourced. Amendment 25 would push this forward by requiring Scottish Ministers to lay before Scottish Parliament a report on progress towards implementing objectives, proposals and policies of the land use strategy and how these contribute towards achieving climate change targets, at the end of every financial year.
- The CCC has highlighted the key role that land use will play in greenhouse gas removal, which is essential if we are to meet the new target of net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2045. With full political support, adequate resourcing and regional delivery, the LUS could provide a mechanism to deliver the strategic and integrated land use and management change required to maximise greenhouse gas removal in Scotland. It would also aid the targeting of future rural support to activities and areas which contribute most to our climate ambitions.
- One of the challenges with the current legislation is that there is no duty to deliver the policies and proposals in the Land Use Strategy, only the duty to produce and revise it. This has led to the Strategy being sidelined, despite the crucial role it could play, both in addressing the climate emergency and shaping future rural support.
- There was a clear commitment from the Scottish Government in the Programme for Government to develop proposals for implementing land use partnerships and frameworks, establish partnerships by 2021 and task partnerships to create frameworks by 2023. These amendments seek to support these commitments.

33: Agricultural Modernisation Fund

Responding to the CERG, the Programme for Government set out an intention to consider funding implications in the Budget as part of an Agricultural Transformation Programme. This amendment would ensure policies and proposals for any Agricultural Modernisation Fund be considered in the next Climate Change Plan.

- Agriculture and related land use are responsible for around a quarter of greenhouse gas emissions in Scotland.
- Vivid Economics estimates³ that agriculture can reduce emissions by 35% while maintaining current production. Many of these mitigation measures will save the farmer money in the longer term, however, upfront costs may be prohibitive.
- Currently there is not specific funding available to the agricultural sector to support farmers with the upfront costs.
- We believe this gap could be addressed by Amendment 33 and hope to see further commitments made in the Budget process.

³ https://www.wwf.org.uk/sites/default/files/2019-01/WWF_Report_VIVID_Jan_2019.pdf

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