Written evidence from Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO)

Summary

- The strong climate change legislation in Scotland is commendable but will only be worthwhile if it translates to real carbon reductions which contribute to mitigation of global climate change.

- Missing the first annual target set by the Climate Change Act was disappointing and set a worrying precedent. Scotland must now fully commit to its obligations and ensure that combatting climate change remains a key government priority.

- Many organisations in the third sector are concerned that the RPP2 is overly reliant on proposals and needs firmer policies with greater detail provided on how targets will be met.

- Placing greater emphasis on promoting behaviour change through community based action and initiatives would deliver better outcomes and would align with policy goals for community empowerment and resilience.

- Third sector initiatives such as Transition Town’s and Fife Diet provide good models for connecting communities around environmental purposes and promoting low carbon behaviour and environmental responsibility.

- The third sector would like to see a new and more ambitious community renewable energy target set for 2030.

- The RPP2 should look to build on social capital instead of focusing mainly on infrastructure and physical approaches.

- To ensure the strategy gets back on track the government should build in carbon reduction measures to other policy areas where a contribution can be made.

Our response

SCVO welcomes the opportunity to respond to this enquiry. We recognise the importance of Scotland having ambitious emissions targets as a critical part of global efforts to tackle climate change. The strong climate change legislation in Scotland is commendable but will only be meaningful if it translates to real carbon reductions which contribute to mitigation of climate change.

General

Missing the first annual target set by the Climate Change Act was disappointing and set a worrying precedent. Scotland must now fully commit to its obligations and ensure that combatting climate change remains a key government priority. More ambitious abatement policies should be outlined which aim to exceed targets and ensure they are not missed again. Many organisations in the third sector share the concerns raised by SCCS that RPP2 is overly reliant on proposals and needs firmer policies with greater detail provided on how targets will be met.
The focus in the RPP2 is on continued sustainable economic growth rather than looking at wider wellbeing implications. The arguments for reducing emissions should be based on more than pure economic decisions and aim to improve what matters most to people. There should be more emphasis on the social impacts of policies and proposals which account for the added value they deliver.

**Behaviour change - The Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee**

The RPP2 recognises the importance of understanding and influencing behaviour change and references a new Low Carbon Scotland: Behaviours Framework which is due to be published during the scrutiny of RPP2. Not aligning the publication of this document with that of the main RPP2 is an unusual step which makes it difficult to assess what is an important part of the overall strategy. Based on the information provided in RPP2 we would like to make the following points:

We note the recognition in the RPP2 of the effectiveness of the Climate Challenge Fund in delivering behaviour change through the various projects that were funded.

“Evidence from the CCF review suggests that community projects are wellplaced to deliver pro-environmental behaviour change because of:

- Their ability to tailor and personalise their messages and interventions to appeal to individual participants” motivations and overcome the particular barriers that apply in each case;
- Their position in the community as trusted entities that are seen to have the community’s interests at heart; and
- Their ability to engage those who are „moderately interested” in the environment and open to the idea of change (who make up a fairly sizeable proportion of the population), and spark them into action.”

The third sector’s view is that placing greater emphasis on promoting behaviour change amongst the general public through community based action and initiatives would deliver better outcomes and would align with policy goals for community empowerment and resilience. This should not just be restricted to the projects delivered by the Climate Challenge Fund but should be a key component of the strategic approach to influencing behaviour.

Third sector initiatives such as Transition Town’s and Fife Diet provide good models for connecting communities around environmental purposes and promoting low carbon behaviour and environmental responsibility.

The 10 insights on how to influence people’s behaviour outlines good principles for bringing about behaviour change but there is little action outlined for specific policies or proposals to bring this about. Behaviour change takes time and with significant carbon savings dependent on success in this area, it is critical that this process is given greater priority. We hope the Framework when published will set out a clear and detailed strategy for addressing this issue.
Fuel Poverty - The Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee & Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee

The RPP2 outlines a number of important measures for improving the energy efficiency of housing which help to alleviate fuel poverty. These are positive steps but many organisations in the third sector are concerned that some of the measures outlined in RPP2 could pass on costs to consumers. This could exacerbate fuel poverty and threaten the duty to eradicate it by 2016.

The Scottish Housing Quality Standard has helped improve standards in energy efficiency in social housing. To help reduce fuel poverty we support the proposal in RPP2 for similar standards to be introduced to the private rented sector. It will be important to have the correct mix of incentives and regulation to encourage private landlords to improve their homes whilst ensuring that minimum standards protect tenants when they choose not to.

In addition, there are concerns that RPP1 and RPP2 have a confusing array of funding and improvement schemes which could leave the average householder confused about the best course of action for them. Whilst advice is available it would be preferable to simplify and consolidate these schemes where possible and bring them under more unified branding.

Renewable Energy - The Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee

There is support in the third sector for the 2020 renewable energy targets and in particular the 500MW target for local and community ownership. However, the sector would like to see a new and more ambitious target set for 2030 which only takes into account genuine community ownership. This would give communities greater confidence to develop new projects and deliver the increased benefits that ownership brings.

In addition to financial benefits, a degree of ownership with a genuine stake in the scheme is more likely to lead to a greater understanding and adoption of wider low carbon behaviour in the community. This is evident in the progress being made in places like Fintry, where money from ownership of renewable energy is being used to finance energy saving projects and promote low carbon behaviour in the community. In this way the money invested in community renewable projects can deliver a greater return by providing: direct carbon reductions from the scheme itself, additional finance invested in environmental projects and behaviour and attitudinal change in the community.

To allow more communities the opportunity to benefit from renewable energy schemes there is support in the sector for it to be mandatory for communities to have the opportunity for partial ownership of any renewable energy development, on- and off-shore.

Governance - The Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee

We welcome the commitment outlined in RPP2 to take a ‘whole Government approach’ to tackling climate change. Positive leadership and coordination from the Government will be required to ensure future targets are met but it will also be important for governments to properly utilise the creativity and expertise in
communities. The RPP2 places a great emphasis on infrastructure and physical approaches. However there is little outlined for building on social capital which will be necessary for success.

Government can play a strong top down role through legislation, regulation and finance but bottom up initiatives developed by communities also need to be encouraged and supported. Third sector organisations can play a key role in disseminating information and promoting good practice through their extensive networks. This would ensure that action is coordinated locally as well as nationally with knowledge and experience flowing up as well as down.

To ensure transparency and accountability and that the correct policies are being pursued, there should be further detail published on how specific policies are performing against expectations and appropriate monitoring in place. The Carbon Reduction Activity reports\(^\text{vii}\) provide insufficiently detailed data to accurately scrutinise policies and their success.

Local authorities also have an important role to play in reducing emissions through their own activity and promoting change locally. We are encouraged by the annual reports\(^\text{viii}\) produced by local authorities as part of the Climate Change declaration and the commitments made in some areas. The quality of these reports is variable but there can be a good level of ambition and a high level of data presented. However, it is difficult to compare and contrast data from each local authority as it is often reported in different ways. To make analysis easier the government should investigate whether common data sets could be employed which enable more effective monitoring of local authorities progress.

There are local outcomes related to climate change incorporated into Single Outcome Agreements but the latest Scottish Government guidance on SOAs prioritised\(^\text{ix}\) five areas which make no contribution to wards tackling climate change. This is indicative of the challenge required to keep climate change at the top of the agenda and ensure other policy initiatives continue to make a contribution.

The Procurement Reform Bill is another good example of this. This single piece of legislation will have a huge impact on emissions through the delivery of billions of pounds of public services and their associated carbon emissions. When the draft bill comes before Parliament it is important that its potential impact on emissions reductions is scrutinised. Changing the name from the Sustainable Procurement bill sent out a worrying message about where the priorities of the new bill will lie. Many in the third sector would like to see the bill focus on Social Impact rather than Best Value. This would place greater emphasis on social outcomes and give greater priority to areas like carbon reduction.

**Conclusion**

The third sector welcomed the ambitious emissions targets outlined in the Climate Change Act. However, there are now concerns in the sector that the first target was not met. The long term goals to tackle climate change require vigilance and bravery on the part of decision makers but will be beneficial in the long run. To ensure the strategy gets back on track and meets future targets the government should commit to more policies aimed specifically at reducing emissions and build in measures to other policy areas where a contribution can be made. The third sector has a crucial
role to play in delivering projects, disseminating information, promoting behaviour change and connecting people together. Its experience and knowledge should be further utilised across the sectors for the added value it can bring.

i http://www.transitionnetwork.org/about
ii http://www.fifiediet.co.uk/
iv http://www.transitionnetwork.org/about
v http://www.fifiediet.co.uk/
vi http://www.fintrydt.org.uk/
vi http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Environment/climatechange/scotlands-action/EmissionReduction/ActivityReports
viii http://climatechange.sustainable-scotland.net/index.asp?pg=3