Draft Climate Change Plan

Scottish Natural Heritage

Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) is a non-departmental public body funded by the Scottish Government through Grant-in-Aid. We are the Scottish Government’s advisers on issues relating to nature and landscape. Our statutory purpose is to:

- secure the conservation and enhancement of nature and landscapes;
- foster understanding and facilitate their enjoyment of them, and
- advise on their sustainable use and management.

Scotland’s nature and landscapes are recognised internationally, and this natural capital plays an important role in supporting economic growth, improving people’s health and wellbeing, adapting to climate change and strengthening communities. We work with partners both nationally and locally to maintain and enhance these assets and to improve the public benefits generated from their sustainable use, both now and in the future.

As a public body, Scottish Natural Heritage is identified as a ‘major player’ in delivering the statutory duties under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 to contribute to the delivery of Scotland’s emissions reduction targets (and adaptation programme). Climate change represents one of the biggest challenges for Scotland’s nature and landscapes. Our current priorities for responding to climate change are set out in Climate Change and nature in Scotland (updated March 2016).

The following information is provided to support the Committee’s scrutiny of the draft Climate Change Plan. Please note that we will be providing comments to Scottish Government at a later date on the associated Environmental Report, in our role as Strategic Environmental Assessment consultation authority, and on the draft Energy Strategy, so our evidence here does not relate to these documents.

**Renewable energy**

We strongly welcome the target for 50% of all energy from renewables by 2030 and, based on current progress, we believe this target is achievable. We are committed to providing the resources to sustain our engagement in the development of the renewables sector and helping get the right development in the right place.

Given the central role that onshore wind will place in meeting these targets, it is important that onshore wind farms make the maximum contribution to carbon emissions reduction. Onshore wind farms must be developed in a way which minimises the disturbance of peatland and associated carbon emissions.

If the grid is to be decarbonised by 2025 (para 4.4.14) it is essential that new ways are found to construct wind farms on peatland that avoid the need to disturb peatland, and that the carbon calculator takes account of the decarbonisation of the grid. If not, there is a very real risk that onshore wind farms built on peatland could become net emitters of carbon emissions, which would conflict with the draft Climate Change Plan Policy outcome 2: By 2030, emissions from electricity generation are
negative, providing a net reduction in energy system emissions. A significant proportion of upland wind farms are built on peatland.

We will respond in more detail to the policy around renewable energy in our response to the Energy Strategy and Onshore Wind Policy Statement.

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