Draft Climate Change

2050 Climate Group

Introduction:

The 2050 Climate Group aims to engage, educate and empower future leaders in Scotland to take action on climate change. We want to inspire young people to get involved not only in the Group, but also in the design of policy, acting as catalysts for change to ensure a sustainable future beyond the year 2050. In providing evidence to the committees scrutinizing the draft Climate Change Plan (CCP), we do so not as technical experts in the subject matter (although we do have such expertise within our network of young leaders), but as experts in our area of work: leading a social movement to a low carbon Scotland. We also consider ourselves as representatives of the next generation of leaders in Scotland.

General comments:

Firstly, we applaud the Government’s success in leading the UK in greenhouse gas emissions reductions and achieving targets early. We are proud to live and work in a country that takes action on climate change seriously and that seeks to be progressive in its approach. In particular, the Cabinet Secretary Roseanna Cunningham’s comment that it is of the highest importance that the CCP is supported and owned by the people of Scotland resonates strongly with us. However, it is in this regard that we feel more could – and should – be done to engage and consider young people in the policy process. We acknowledge that the Climate Change Hub has made commendable efforts towards this, but we are concerned that similar efforts are lacking across other government departments.

We work to ‘mainstream’ climate change within our generation and create a ‘new normal’ whereby the low carbon transition is seen as everyone’s remit and we would like the government as a whole to follow our lead in this.

Integration of the Plan and a strong sense of ownership for its success across government departments is an area that we recognise as also being critical for ensuring Scotland’s sustainable future. Specifically, ensuring coherent and joined-up thinking between the interrelated areas of transport, infrastructure and planning, finance and economic, and innovation must go beyond the coherence provided by the TIMES model – the policy drivers and priorities of the teams and individuals responsible for them must be aligned. Hence we feel the Plan’s importance should be addressed more effectively within the CPP.

While we understand that the strategic framework of Scotland’s Economic Strategy and details given in Section 3.1 go some way to addressing the collaborative and coherent approach needed, we are concerned that it does not go far enough. We feel strongly that the concept and narrative of sustainability must be embedded across government departments and policy areas. This would both tie together themes such as fairness, prosperity, health and the environment, and provide a means to focus cross-government priorities in a people-centred way. In turn, this would allow links between climate solutions, well-being and equality, and a resilient
economy to be communicated clearly and coherently. We believe this is key to creating a future that we, as young people, want to see.

We believe that a clear people-centred narrative of sustainability is not only key for embedding cross-government coherence, integration and ownership of the CCP, it is also necessary for realising wider benefits, avoiding unintended consequences, and achieving the necessary behaviour changes. This is because framing climate action in such an integrated way – with benefits to people as the ultimate goal – opportunities for wider benefits are built-in and multiple reasons are provided for people to change their habits. After all, climate change is not only a ‘green’ issue, it is an equalities issue, an economic issue, a public health issue, a national security issue, and so on. It also provides a means of framing the climate targets as everyone’s responsibility – something we also believe needs to be made clearer in this Plan.

The framework already provided by the Sustainable Development Goals and the Open Government Partnership – both of which have been laudably committed to by the Scottish Government – is a potentially powerful means of achieving this mind set and narrative. However, we note with disappointment that the Sustainable Development Goals are only mentioned within the CCP in relation to waste targets, and the Open Government Partnership is not mentioned at all. This is despite their strong relevance across all sectors and importance in achieving support and ownership through greater transparency and citizen empowerment.

**Written evidence to the Economy, Jobs and Fair Work Committee:**

Scotland’s electricity sector has taken an impressive trajectory over the past ~15 years, and we are particularly encouraged by the acceleration of renewables and elimination of coal-fired generation in contributing to this. We are also very encouraged to see a high level of ambition for further decarbonising electrical generation and achieving negative emissions by 2030. However, we have a number of concerns over the route laid out for achieving this ambition.

The changes proposed in the climate change plan will mean significant change for people in Scotland - change in the way they work, in where they work, in what they work on and in. We would like to see the government consider fully the ramifications of, for example, the scale of decarbonisation of the electricity grid. Too often we get stuck into thinking that the way people live and work now is what we must continue to do and don’t fully embrace change. We educate and train our next generation to continue the ways of working and work in industries that do not have a viable, economically sustainable future. In order for the Scottish Government and the people of Scotland to not find this proposal at odds with their lives and livelihoods, there must be investment in futureproofing areas that will feel these changes most significantly. For example, how does the government plan to transition the Aberdeen economy beyond the current reliance on fossil fuels? Is our primary, secondary and tertiary education system training young people for a low carbon future? This climate change plan is a road map for significant change to the Scottish economy and it needs to be considered how to support people through this change. It cannot be a technocratic transition as this will only alienate and divide communities.
While whole-heartedly supporting the Government’s aim to encourage the demonstration and commercialisation of Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS), we recognise the recent history of repeated false starts for the industry in the UK. This leaves us to wonder to what degree the Government has considered the impact of scenarios whereby CCS has not reached commercialisation in Scotland by 2030, and we would like to see policies and proposals in place that addresses this concern. Specifically, we wonder what the impact will be on other sectors of failing to achieve annual emissions of -1.2MtCO$_2$ by 2032 in the electricity sector.

The assumption that by combining bioenergy with CCS Scotland will be able to achieve negative emissions is in itself a serious concern for us. While bioenergy is currently rated as having zero emissions under the EU-ETS, it is well recognised by academia, industry and governments that this is not the case, and that there are multiple serious potential unintended consequences in sourcing sufficient biomass for combustion – particularly around the impacts of indirect land use change. Hence, we find it difficult to see how bioenergy use on the scale that is proposed in the Plan can be considered a low carbon or sustainable option.

With regards to energy demand, we note that behaviour change is acknowledged within the Plan as being key for addressing emissions from public, private and domestic buildings as well as transport (as we move increasingly towards electrification). In our response to the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee we have addressed the fact that we find the direction of the Government’s engagement on climate change promising but that the scale of ambition is not commensurate with what is required. Here we would like to reiterate this observation and add that in addition to significantly enhanced engagement across all sectors, we strongly believe that additional support for low carbon training is needed. We see that there is a fundamental need not only for people in all walks of life to feel they have a part to play in meeting our climate targets (engagement), but also that they understand how to act (education) and are fully equipped to do so (empowerment). With this in mind, we would like to highlight that most of the policies and proposals laid out to address energy demand reduction, such as funding mechanisms, are only effective if people are already engaged and educated. We would like to see policies and proposals that build on the notion of providing expert advice and work towards embedding a universal carbon comprehension.