Written responses from the Scottish Government

Following its meeting on 24 January 2017, the Committee requested further written updates from the Scottish Government on several areas. Responses relating to peatlands and waste have been provided below.

Peatlands

The policy on restoration grants mentions funding being available for “eligible” land managers. What is the definition of an eligible land manager?

Like any grant scheme it is important that Peatland Action has clear eligibility criteria to ensure that the benefits are maximised. SNH are currently finalising arrangements to open up applications for grant funding and are reviewing the scheme criteria in the light of an evaluation of earlier work undertaken by ClimatexChange. Eligibility will include all those who own or manage with landowner’s agreement peatland, which is defined as having peat deeper than 50 cm deep. The applicant does not need to own the land but must have the agreement of the land owner.

Table 6-1 of the draft Climate Change Plan suggests 10 plus projects each year will be denied funding and the Committee sought comment on how this indicative figure was arrived at.

Table 6-1 is based on historical experience with Peatland Action applications. There is no suggestion, subject to resources, of projects being denied funding. The table identified our expectations as to the number of applications that will come forward and which will meet eligibility criteria. For example some applications may not be able to go forward in a specific financial year as not all the necessary consents are in place in advance to guarantee that work can be undertaken.

Paragraph 13.4.13 of the draft Climate Change Plan notes the policy is aimed at large scale projects and the Committee requested details of what would constitute a large scale project as opposed to a small fragmented one, and whether these will be focussed on badly degraded bogs or easier to repair ones, or a mixture of both.

The aspirations set out at 13.4.13 are not to exclude any potential projects coming forward but reflected that as part of increasing our restoration ambition that we want to be ambitious in the scale of activity that is undertaken. We expect to encourage a range of projects to come forward that will deliver multiple benefits at a variety of scales.

The Committee sought clarification on whether funding for peatland restoration restricted to restoration or is it also for protection of that work thereafter? The Convener referenced on-going maintenance which could be required for areas, such as fencing to protect from deer. The Committee also asked if funding for this maintenance work is not part of the policy, where will this come from?

The funding identified is to support the delivery of practical restoration. As part of the commitment by land managers in seeking support it is expected that there is a longer term commitment to supporting the restoration benefits that will be delivered. This
reflects that in addition to the public good benefits delivered that land managers also receive private benefits. The work through Peatland Action needs to be seen in the wider context of the National Peatland Plan, an initiative led by SNH and Scottish Government with a wide range of partners that has set an ambitious vision to encouraging good management of peatlands, delivering appropriate protection and where required supporting restoration. The public sector has a strong leadership role to play in conjunction with individual land managers.

Waste

The Committee asked how the plan for the waste sector seeks to deliver on related targets, whether in waste or in other sectors and whether there are any conflicts between the draft Climate Change Plan and other recycling or waste targets.

Our Circular Economy Strategy, “Making Things Last” places our action on waste and on the circular economy firmly in the context of climate change. That context is important in helping councils and others to make connections between their statutory duties on waste and recycling, and broader outcomes for the environment and the economy. Action to reduce waste is very closely aligned to action to reduce emissions, and the policies and proposals in the waste chapter are intended to deliver both climate change targets and waste/recycling targets.

The Committee asked how energy from waste fits in with the assumptions made for the waste sector and whether there was potential conflict between energy from waste and other disposal commitments (burning, recycling targets).

The modelling in support of the Climate Change Plan pathway shows that energy generated from Solid Waste reduces over the course of the Plan. Given the limited role of energy from waste in a more circular economy, our priority is to ensure that long term decisions on waste infrastructure are as well informed as possible. We are working with SEPA and Zero Waste Scotland to continue to improve the way that we provide and present information on the anticipated capacity requirements for future waste infrastructure, for use by planning authorities and industry. This will help ensure the capacity of waste infrastructure developed, such as in thermal treatment facilities, is appropriate.

The Committee asked if there is a potential conflict of food waste reduction targets and the bio-refinery road map.

There is no conflict between our food waste reduction target and Scotland’s National Plan for Industrial Biotechnology. As noted in Making Things Last, while our primary focus is on reducing waste, we want an increasing proportion of biological wastes to be used for production of high value materials and chemicals, maximising environmental and economic benefits and replacing non-renewable chemical feedstocks.

The Committee asked what support will be provided to local authorities in those areas where there may not be the expertise to set up the infrastructure required for food waste and recycling measures required, and as recommended by the Committee on Climate Change.
We are reviewing the rural exemptions for food waste, as recommended by the CCC. While we cannot pre-empt the conclusions of that review, Zero Waste Scotland can provide funding and technical support to individual local authorities to support change and incentivise best practice in improving kerbside recycling. This can include access to expertise, training and temporary ‘implementation’ staff.

The Committee asked what consideration has been given to local authority partnership working with regard to recycling and waste? This question was asked with reference to reducing levels of service around the country.

There has been considerable progress made in local authority partnership working with regard to recycling and waste. We have agreed the Household Recycling Charter with COSLA, for more consistent local collections, improving quantity and quality of recycling. 24 Councils have now signed up. As well as making recycling easier for householders, consistency makes it easier for Councils to consider collaborating over how they provide recycling services.

The Committee asked what consideration has been given to deposit return or producer responsibility with regard to the draft Climate Change Plan.

Making Things Last notes our intention to build on the evidence already provided and give further consideration to the role that a deposit return system could play in Scotland. It also articulates our intention to explore how we can improve the producer responsibility systems, potentially through a single framework to promote products that support a more circular economy, for example through increased durability, recycled content and greater reuse. This work is ongoing.

The Committee asked what, in terms of employment, further work is anticipated in terms of gathering evidence on the opportunities provided in the waste sector

The types of approaches set out in Making Things Last can lead to economic benefits across a wide range of activities such as manufacturing, retail, transport, construction and repair. The strategy identifies the potential economic and environmental opportunities underpinning the prioritisation of our actions. We would expect the employment benefits of these interventions to become clearer as implementation proceeds.