

Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee

Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Bill

SUBMISSION FROM 2050 CLIMATE GROUP

Role and views of young people on the Climate Change Bill

1. About 2050 Climate Group

2050 Climate Group aims to engage, educate and empower Scotland's young people to take the lead in creating a low-carbon future. It is a youth-run charity, which through its flagship programme - the Young Leaders Development Programme - has provided over 400 18-35 year olds with leadership skills and climate change knowledge. This has created a network of young leaders who are taking personal, professional and political action to combat climate change. Our generation will be the one living with the consequences of today's action or inaction on climate change, and thus it is paramount that we have the skills, knowledge and opportunities to lead the change and be a part of the decision-making process, both now and in the years up to 2050. There is untapped potential in the expertise, skills and commitment of this generation to support the Government in leading Scotland to a low carbon, sustainable and equitable future.

2. 2050 Climate Group's response to the consultation

2050 Climate Group's response to the Climate Change Bill Consultation in September 2017 was based on the views of our members. We engaged with over 50 Young Leaders and volunteers in vibrant discussions at engagement events delivered in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Inverness; and a further 25 through an online survey.

The key message from our consultation engagement was the need for urgent and ambitious target-setting accompanied by practical steps and transparent action plans.

2050 Climate Group believes that raising the target to 90% is a step in the right direction; however innovation and infrastructure investment follows from ambitious targets and progressive, predictable policy, and therefore the target for 2050 should be set at net zero emissions in this Bill. This way Scotland can not only prove itself as a world leader in driving innovation in low carbon technologies, but can also follow the principles of climate justice by acknowledging and acting on its role as a historical contributor to climate change.

Additionally, 2050 Climate Group Young Leaders wish to see transparent, clear goals and processes, and more engagement with various public groups. Our Young Leaders recognise that in addition to setting ambitious targets, it is crucial to provide practical solutions for meeting them in order to ensure targets do not remain arbitrary goals and that there are implications for missing these targets.

We are advocating for policy which creates a future where people can not only survive but thrive; in the words of one Young Leader, “Young people also see the world in a different way to everyone else. While leaders around the world bury their heads in the sand over climate change, we are seeing [Climate Change (Scotland) Bill] as an opportunity to change the world for the better.”

Implementation of the bill

1. Can target setting be considered without also considering what action will be required to meet them?

2050 Climate Group believes that climate change targets are important drivers of policy innovation and effort to reduce damaging greenhouse gas emissions. While we agree with the Scottish Government’s view that targets must be reasonable and credible, we also recognise that they have an important role in encouraging changes in behaviour now, and supporting low carbon lifestyles as the ‘new normal’.

We believe that a balance can be struck between setting an ambitious net zero target for 2050 that lies just beyond current pathways outlined by the Government’s scientific advisers, and setting credible interim targets for 2030 and 2040 where actions can be clearly mapped based on current knowledge.

We recognise that we cannot anticipate what technologies will be available to us twenty years from now. The scale and pace of technological change in the years since the millennium gives us confidence that the 2050 target can be set at a higher level than outlined by current modelling.

Setting a net zero target for 2050 now also ensures Scotland continues to be a climate leader and sends a clear signal about our commitment to leading the change to a low carbon society in the decades ahead. We note that other countries including Sweden and New Zealand have already made commitments to set net zero targets by 2050 at the latest.

Even though we may not currently have the modelling to show us the pathway to net zero by 2050, we believe the Government can maintain its credible and responsible approach to climate change policy by introducing supportive policies and funding for research and development into low carbon technologies over the next decade. This should include a particular focus on technologies that reduce emissions from transport, agriculture and buildings - areas highlighted by the Committee in its response to the latest Climate Change Plan.

Furthermore, our members frequently highlighted that adopting policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and supporting the transition to a low carbon society will bring wider benefits to society. These include clean air, stronger local supply chains, warm homes and better health outcomes from living more active lifestyles.

The Young Leaders volunteering with 2050 Climate Group are driven in their work by the message that #2050startsnow - we urge the Committee to consider that outlook when recommending Scotland's new climate targets.

2. Challenges associated with implementation of the Climate Change Bill

Our response to this call for evidence reflects the feedback we received on the Climate Change Bill from over 100 young people during the past year, with the overwhelming majority supporting a net zero target for 2050 to be set now.

Our members noted several sectors where low carbon policies could be challenging to implement, including agriculture, transport and the built environment. Investing in research and development in these areas now could drive innovation to make it easier for these sectors to adapt.

Responses to the Government's public consultation on the Bill showed an overwhelming majority in favour of setting a net zero target now. However there may be challenges in clearly communicating the relevance of individual policies that will be required to achieve this target. Clear messaging will be needed about the short- and long-term benefits of transitioning to a low carbon society and the part that individual policies play in realising this. 2050 Climate Group is proud to be able to support this by reaching out to young people, but we recognise that different messages may be required for other generations.

We also recognise that setting a net zero target in this Bill could also make it more difficult for Scotland to meet its annual climate targets, particularly in the years before low carbon technologies (e.g. electric vehicles, etc.) become widely affordable. This is challenging for any government but we believe that a more ambitious target for 2050 will increase demand and speed up the dissemination of low cost, low carbon technology.

Finally, and most significantly from 2050 Climate Group's perspective, the targets set in this Bill will ultimately be met by the next generation who will be the leaders and decision makers in the 2030s and 2040s. The voices of today's young people must be taken into account when determining the targets they will need to meet in the future.

Recommendations from 2050 Climate Group and our planned further engagement on the Climate Change Bill

Based on our Climate Change Bill Consultation engagement with Young Leaders, 2050 Climate Group recommends that the Climate Change Bill should:

1. Set a net zero greenhouse gas emissions target, thereby showcasing Scotland as an ambitious and trailblazing nation in reaching a low carbon future.
2. Commit to actions that deliver a greener, cleaner, more equitable society, and reduce our reliance on fossil fuels. This will be made possible through:

- a. Implementing pragmatic policies to support all sectors in the transition to a low carbon Scotland.
- b. Involving young people in the climate change policy making process to empower the next generation in protecting Scotland's climate future.
- c. Changing the way climate change is viewed in Scotland by showcasing the opportunities for Scotland's people, businesses and economy, and being explicit in Scotland's ambition to become a global leader to ensure a sustainable future.

We recognise that our recommendations may be challenging to achieve, however 2050 Climate Group is prepared to keep engaging, educating and empowering Scotland's young people to take the lead in creating a low-carbon future. One of the ways we will show our continued support for more ambitious climate targets is planned engagement with young people during Climate Week in October 2018, where we will run a social media campaign to highlight the ways 2050 Climate Group's Young Leaders are 'stretching' their efforts to reduce their own emissions further - echoing the higher targets that could be set in the Climate Change Bill. Young Leaders will be encouraged to share their experiences on Twitter using the hashtag #myclimatechanges as suggested by the Commission. We believe that this way the Committee will gain an insight into the vast number of ideas that our generation has and the actions we plan to carry out in order to achieve a low carbon, sustainable and equitable future.