Written Submission from The Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges Scotland

For consideration by the following committees:

- Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee
- Economy, Jobs and Fair Work Committee

The Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges (EAUC) and our Scottish members, representatives from the further and higher education (FHE) sector, support the Scottish Government’s efforts to tackle climate change. EAUC-Scotland invited all our Scottish contacts to comment on the Scottish Government draft Climate Change Plan, in order to provide a FHE sector response, and a summary of these comments are provided below.

General

Overall the sector welcomes the ambitious targets set by the Scottish Government and is supportive of the draft Climate Change Plan, recognising the role that the universities and colleges can play with helping transition Scotland to a low carbon, sustainable environment while supporting the growth of the Scottish economy.

The EAUC would welcome a dialogue with the Scottish Government in order for more inclusion of the universities and colleges within the plan, as major players within the Scottish public sector. Universities and colleges hold a unique position in society as both the owners and operators of large estates impacting on carbon emission reduction targets, as well as in their role as researchers, and educators of Scotland’s future generations and global citizens. The tertiary education sector has the potential to make a significant impact in the education and integration of climate change understanding in society as well as help drive the behavior change agenda, and failure to recognise and capitalise on this could limit the effectiveness of other policies within the plan.

The need for innovation and progress in researching and implementing future technologies has been noted, and is a challenge that the research community will be an active participant in. The FHE sector can fill both the role of researching and as a ‘Living Lab’ for the transition to the low carbon society.

Behavior change is a key focus on the work and research conducted by the EAUC, including promotion of the Scottish Government ISM model. Although the draft CCP identifies areas that behavior change will have an important impact (e.g. transport), further guidance support on the implementation of this would be appreciated.

Services
A recent report created for the EAUC in Scotland analysed the 2014/15 carbon emissions data from the Public Bodies Climate Change Duties (PBCCD) reports submitted in 2015. The sector represented 14% of the whole public sector carbon emissions, with 480000tCO\textsubscript{2} being produced. Although not all institutions submitted data during this voluntary reporting year, an overall sector increase can be noted against the 2008/9 baseline. The main bulk of emissions are from Scope 1 and 2 sources, with reliance on natural gas and grid electricity as energy for the buildings. The electricity and heat targets outlined in the draft CCP to be ‘near zero carbon’ by 2032 are ambitious, with the 10% reduction in heat demand and 94% of heat supplied by low carbon technologies. Many within the FHE sector would struggle to reach these without significant investment to improve the fabric of older buildings as well as implement low carbon technologies. Key recommendations from this report which apply to the draft CCP would be the investment in CHP technology to ensure potential efficiencies are recognised, coupled with renewables appraisals. The report can be accessed here.

It is understood that more detail on the work planned for reducing carbon emissions is set out in ‘Scotland's Energy Efficiencies Programme’ (SEEP), and the EAUC will be encouraging the FHE sector to contribute to the consultation.

It has also been noted that continued support is necessary from government, local authorities and other regional stakeholders for city-wide schemes to be successfully implemented. These relationships will create the networks to support progress in infrastructure and promote the use of sustainable energy sources contributing to further carbon reductions from community to city-scale. As noted in the draft CCP, cross-sector work will be a key delivery mechanism for many of the targets set. Cross-sector work and collaboration has been a focal point of the work that EAUC supports within the FHE sector. It would be encouraging to see a key strategy in helping facilitate and boost the connections within public sector bodies, collaborating and encouraging knowledge share, as well as promoting this within the wider community.

Although the draft CCP does mention capitalising on the Scottish working population’s skills and talent, further detail and implementation of this could be useful throughout the report. The capacities of human resource is important for delivering these reductions and reaching targets set by the government, however as budgets are reduced, employment of specialised resource becomes less of a priority placing pressure on an already pressed workforce. There also needs to be increased attention on the development of the skills required for Scotland to develop a low-carbon future. Universities and colleges as key players, alongside government and the private sector, in this agenda.
Travel

The FHE sector have been named as a public sector partner in delivering Policy Outcome 8 in reference to the intended increase in domestic passenger journeys travelled by active modes of transport, including a target of 10% of everyday journeys being completed by bike. The sector recognises that the maintenance of infrastructure as well as encouraging behaviour change is vital for this outcome to be achieved, and would support connections and networks local and regionally within local government and other public sector bodies. This would ensure that public transport and active travel are accessible, financially and physically, as well as communicated and promoted throughout the community.

The wider impacts of improving low carbon travel options, such as improving air quality and human health and increasing resource efficiency are recognised and welcomed by the FHE sector. Innovation and mass take-up will however require significant investment, allocated as a ‘preventative spend’ against future health and resource-depletion challenges.

Waste

The FHE sector supports the draft CCP plans to maximise resource reuse, recycling and recovery through the promotion of circular economy practices. Life cycle analysis and the circular economy could play a larger part in order to reach the target of 70% of all waste being recycled by 2025. Suggestions have been made that promoting ‘reduction’ is essential as the first process of the waste framework, in order to increase preventative methods over mitigation. Behaviour change and education are also embedded within this section. Examples such as ‘take back’ schemes have been used by the sector, encouraging the manufacturer or supplier to have reuse and recycling options at point of purchase.

There have been multiple suggestions as to other national initiatives that could help implement this, and the EAUC would encourage a dialogue with the committees to promote these opportunities.

Conclusion

EAUC-Scotland, representing the FHE sector, is supportive of the draft CCP produced by the Scottish Government. There are some concerns around resource, both financial and human, for delivering targets concerning heating and electricity in the services sector. It would also be encouraging seeing a more robust framework for behaviour change strategy and networking opportunities to encourage the cross-sector work that is mentioned.

However the sector recognises the part that it can play in educating and encouraging an active Scottish society driving the transition to a low carbon future. As both educators and major players within the public sector, we would encourage a
dialogue with the Scottish Government in order to input more impacts that the FHE can have within the Climate Change Plan.

We would like to note that due to the limited time for responses to be collected that a large proportion of the sector were not able to submit evidence. However, if there are any further questions please contact EAUC-Scotland who will be happy to discuss our response further.

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