

Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee

Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Bill

SUBMISSION FROM UniteScotland

**Unite the union response to call for evidence to the
Scottish Parliament's Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee
on the Climate Change Bill**

Unite the Union Scotland represents around 140,000 working people and their families throughout Scotland. Unite is the UK's largest trade union with 1.4 million members in a range of industries including transport, construction, financial services, manufacturing, print and media, energy, the voluntary and non-profit sectors, education, creative industries, local government and the NHS.

Executive Summary

Unite remains committed to meeting the climate change challenge through a just transition to a low carbon world that ensures workers are treated decently and that any transition promotes high quality jobs.

We need to put in place measures to ensure that building a low carbon economy results in a growth in employment which protects workers' livelihoods and creates a new industrial base. If planned and delivered in the right ways, achieving decarbonisation should also help deliver a fairer, greener country with better housing, cleaner transport, improved health and greater equity.

The Scottish and UK Government's must therefore take a more strategic approach to meeting the climate change target including taking a stake in industries that would enable them to reduce their carbon footprint including providing leveraging to projects to protect, retain and create jobs while protecting the environment; placing greater weight on the environmental impact in the procurement process and to support environmental reps to deliver sustainable workplaces.

Introduction

While recognising that the transition to a low carbon economy is necessary the challenge may be delivering this in a way that creates prosperity, while protecting and retaining quality jobs. This response will focus on what actions and behaviour change will be required if Scotland is to meet more ambitious climate change targets.

Unite remains committed to meeting the climate change challenge through a just transition to a low carbon world that ensures workers are treated decently and that any transition promotes high quality jobs.

Among other things Unite campaigns for:

- Investment in renewable and low-carbon energy
- New build homes to be fully energy efficient
- Appropriate incentives to improve home and business insulation
- Businesses to audit their energy use to be as efficient as possible
- Renationalisation of the energy sector

The vital importance of the Just Transition approach to realising the transformation to a low carbon economy requires that the Climate Change Bill should enshrine it in a meaningful way. This means:

- Including a commitment that a Just Transition approach will be applied to the creation of a low carbon economy, protecting livelihoods, enhancing social justice and contributing to a fairer and more equal Scotland;
- Including reporting requirement on Just Transition in the Climate Change Plan i.e. on how proposals and policies will affect employment in different sectors, what measures will be put in place to support the transition of the workforce and related communities, the scale and sources of investment; and annual reporting by Ministers on progress towards these;
- Ensuring job opportunities and jobs growth are given equal consideration in the transition to a low-carbon economy;
- Putting the Just Transition Commission on a statutory basis in order to give it the status needed to carry out these functions effectively and help drive the changes needed, for the duration of the climate targets laid out in the Bill;
- Finally, ensuring trade union representation on the Commission to provide oversight and scrutiny to ensure that the livelihoods of workers and of communities are protected and social equity is enhanced.

Transport

Unite also recognises the need for an improved and sustainable public transport system which takes account of social and environmental goals, as much as economic growth. That is why the Scottish Government needs to tempt commuters out of their cars and on to a public transport system built for the future. This should be a public transport system that is affordable, reliable and integrated. Unite believes the best way to achieve this is through public ownership.

Some companies within the public transport network are working hard to address Scotland climate change target. In 2017 Lothian Buses invested around £7 million on clean buses with engines that have lower CO₂ emissions and have the combined reduction equivalent to taking 164 cars per year off the road, with further investment of £20 million for 86 new 'green' vehicles.¹ It could be argued that the company was able to invest such sums in green technology as they are a municipally owned company, with Unite members on the

¹ <https://www.intelligenttransport.com/transport-news/24428/edinburgh-green-lothian-buses/> (accessed 30 July 2018)

Board and instead of profits being distributed to shareholders, they were able to reinvest these profits to make Scotland's capital a cleaner and greener environment to get around.

Unite members are playing a part at Lothian Buses success, but also within Alexander Dennis Limited (ADL), coachbuilders based in Falkirk where our members are involved in all aspects of the business including manufacturing and product development. The company is a Scottish success story in designing and building innovative green buses and a world leader in delivering low and zero emissions vehicles. They have been at the forefront of research and development in clean bus technology, and have exported vehicles to countries such as Mexico and the US.

According to the ADL website: *"The technology solutions include E-Cooling, Smart Pack and Smart Hybrid, which when incorporated on a standard Enviro400 Euro 6 diesel vehicle, can deliver fuel improvements of up to 23%."*²

This new fleet of green buses will help to deliver Scotland climate change target.

Trade union reps

Unite members are having a positive impact in these workplaces and have good relationships with these employers. Yet we are witnessing an increase in attacks on trade union facility time across the country. Only recently SNP controlled West Dunbartonshire Council attempted to reduce the facility time that Unite reps use to carry out their duties from 3.4 posts to 2.³ The threat to cut trade union reps was lifted following a high profile campaign by Unite and others. However such short-sighted intervention was not helpful as it failed to acknowledge the benefits trade union reps can have in the workplace, not only representing the interests of members but in addressing the wider issue of sustainable workplaces.

Unite would therefore welcome Scottish Government support for environmental trade union reps to meet the climate change challenge in the workplace and they should be given adequate facility time to help them deliver greener workplaces. These positions should be in addition to existing trade union representatives.

Housing

Housing availability and affordability remains an important issue across Scotland and the UK. Precarious employment and job insecurity has led to an increase in housing take-up in the private rented sector as fewer people can afford the level of deposit required to get on the property ladder. Scotland needs new homes that are efficient and affordable. However building new affordable homes, while a priority, must be done jointly with ensuring they are fuel efficient homes. Unite policy is to campaign to ensure that all new build homes are fully

² <https://www.alexander-dennis.com/about-us/innovation/> (accessed 31 July 2018)

³ http://www.clydebankpost.co.uk/news/16084089.Union_row_over_SNP_administration_s_budget_cuts/ (accessed 30 July 2018)

energy efficient with built-in solar panels, or other means of renewable energy, capable of maximising energy production. We also recognise that appropriate financial incentives to improve home and business insulation and progress towards zero-emission status including through the use of solar energy, heat pumps, and feeder tariffs is necessary to address issues related to reducing carbon use.

Industrial strategy

Unite is quite clear that the rapid decarbonisation needed for Scotland's contribution to limits set in the Paris Agreement should not be made at the expense of the workforce in sectors which currently extract or depend on the use of fossil fuels. The UK has already experienced badly managed de-industrialisation which led to workers losing out and communities being left behind. Similarly, experience to date shows that the growth of renewable energy generation does not necessarily result in the creation of new manufacturing and engineering capacity and employment in Scotland.

We only have to look at the recent fight to save the jobs at the BiFab fabrication plants in Fife and Isle of Lewis which among other things produces component parts for wind turbines. Following a lack of orders the company's decision to effectively close the yard brought about a full scale campaign by workers and their trade unions together with the Scottish Government to save the plant and to save jobs. Following a take-over by Canadian engineering company DF Barnes, the yards have been as yet, unable to obtain new contracts.

Yet we have the world's most powerful wind turbine, the first of 11 turbines for Vattenfall's European Offshore Wind Deployment Centre recently installed in Scottish water, being manufactured in Denmark.⁴ Unite remains hopeful that there is a future for BiFab but that would rely on them winning contracts via the tendering process. It surely can't be more environmentally friendly to build a turbine in another country and transport it back to where it will be installed?

The tendering process should place a higher weighting on environmental impacts when considering the award.

Renewable energy has the capacity to provide by far the majority of Scotland's energy needs. According to Scottish Renewables: "*Wind generated two thirds of all renewable electricity output in Scotland in 2017. Hydro power contributed almost a quarter of renewable electricity output, and while other technologies such as biomass and marine energy currently make a smaller contribution, they have massive potential for growth in the future.*"⁵

⁴ <https://news.vattenfall.com/en/article/worlds-most-powerful-wind-turbine-installed-aberdeen-bay> (accessed 23 July 2018)

⁵ <https://www.scottishrenewables.com/sectors/renewables-in-numbers/> (accessed 30 July 2018)

Renewable electricity generation is now equivalent to approximately 68 per cent of Scotland's electricity consumption. This means that the 2015 50 per cent renewable electricity target has been met and exceeded.⁶

Nevertheless more could be done to create investment in the manufacture of the infrastructure around renewables. The UK has a history of developing innovative renewable prototypes only to see the manufacture of these take place elsewhere due to greater commitment to financial support overseas. Unite sees a role for the Scottish Investment Bank in providing financial support which would allow the idea to become reality within Scotland's borders.

This example stresses the need for a holistic approach and for a manufacturing strategy that considers environmental sustainability together with economic growth. Until then we are likely to find our ability to reach the latest target set to eliminate greenhouse gas emissions difficult to achieve within the timescale put forward.

Unite recognises the importance of reducing carbon emissions and securing energy supply. That is why we support a balanced energy policy that would allow energy security in the future. This should include a mix of renewables, nuclear and cleaner coal and gas generation including Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS).

If the Scottish Government is serious about climate change then they must also consider public ownership of energy in order to have continuity of supply but also a manufacturing strategy which complements the climate change agenda. The two are inextricably linked more so now than ever with the impending exit from the EU and the unknown consequences on demands on indigenous resources that may come from that.

Oil and gas industry

The UK's offshore industry is going through a transition. A report by the Financial Times in June 2016 estimated that until the mid-2050s, around 470 platforms, 5,000 wells, 10,000km of pipelines and 40,000 concrete blocks will have to be removed from the North Sea. Oil and Gas UK projects the estimated decommissioning cost through to the 2050s ranges between £30bn and £60bn.⁷

The Scottish Government must ensure that Scotland is able to capitalise on the need to retain any decommissioning work in Scotland, with a skilled and ready workforce as well as ensuring that the environmental impact of decommissioning is kept to a minimum.

Unite's concern is that Scotland does not have a coherent strategy to benefit from decommissioning following a Norwegian port winning a contract to decommission Maersk's

⁶ <https://www.scottishrenewables.com/sectors/renewables-in-numbers/> (accessed 30 July 2018)

⁷ FT (8 June), North Sea Oil: The £30bn break-up <https://goo.gl/wVbLTT>

Janice Floating Production Unit after Scottish firms missed out on the decommissioning work following a tendering process.⁸

However there also remains oil and gas reserves that will require to be extracted and we need to find ways that allows for a just transition that retains well-paid jobs and skills of the workforce within these industries as we move towards a low carbon economy.

The Scottish and UK Government's must therefore take a more strategic approach to leveraging such projects to protect and create jobs while protecting the environment.

Unite acknowledges that this may be a difficult balancing act to do and accepts that much has been done by the Scottish Government to reduce emissions particularly around transport. However they have to extend the range wider, be bolder and act faster.

Unite policy

Unite believes only government intervention can ensure that big business and the energy companies provide the investment necessary to deliver a sustainable renewable energy programme that moves away from the current reliance on fossil fuels and towards a low carbon economy. Unite also is committed to:

- Campaign for an immediate annual windfall tax on energy companies, with the money raised invested in renewable energy;
 - Nationalisation of energy while safeguarding jobs, terms and conditions;
- Campaign for profits from energy companies to be re-invested in renewable energy with target dates set for the energy produced from renewables, with an aim to produce 75 per cent of energy from renewables by 2030;
- All new build homes to be fully energy efficient with built-in solar panels, or other means of renewable energy, capable of maximising energy production;
- Appropriate financial incentives to improve home and business insulation and progress towards zero-emission status including through the use of solar energy, heat pumps, and feeder tariffs;
- Ensuring businesses audit their energy use to be as efficient as possible.

We need to put in place measures to ensure that building a low carbon economy results in a growth in employment which protects workers' livelihoods and creates a new industrial base. If planned and delivered in the right ways, achieving decarbonisation should also help deliver a fairer, greener country with better housing, cleaner transport, improved health and greater equity.

⁸ <https://goo.gl/TM5JNy>

Over the last 12 months the UK has witnessed extreme heat and cold, drought, forest fires and floods. We need policies that are backed by the will to bring real change. The planet will not wait.