



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Official Report

RURAL AFFAIRS, CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Wednesday 6 May 2015

Wednesday 6 May 2015

CONTENTS

	Col.
DECISION ON TAKING BUSINESS IN PRIVATE	1
SUBORDINATE LEGISLATION.....	3
Climate Change (Additional Greenhouse Gas) (Scotland) Order 2015 [draft]	3

RURAL AFFAIRS, CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
16th Meeting 2015, Session 4

CONVENER

*Rob Gibson (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Graeme Dey (Angus South) (SNP)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab)

*Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab)

Alex Fergusson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)

*Jim Hume (South Scotland) (LD)

*Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (SNP)

*Michael Russell (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)

Dave Thompson (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:

George Burgess (Scottish Government)

Aileen McLeod (Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Lynn Tullis

LOCATION

The Robert Burns Room (CR1)

Scottish Parliament

Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee

Wednesday 6 May 2015

[The Convener opened the meeting at 10:00]

Decision on Taking Business in Private

The Convener (Rob Gibson): Good morning and welcome to the 16th meeting in 2015 of the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee. I remind everyone to switch off mobile phones, as they interfere with members' thought processes. Tablets are being used for committee business. We have received apologies from Alex Fergusson and Dave Thompson.

Item 1 is a decision on whether to consider the committee's draft letter to the Scottish Government on mandatory public sector climate change reporting in private at future meetings. Does anybody have any comments to make?

Michael Russell (Argyll and Bute) (SNP): I have no comment to make on that item but, before we come to the next item, I would like to raise another issue. I request that the committee recalls representatives of First Milk to give evidence on milk pricing. I suggest that the committee invites the chairman and the new chief executive.

Members will be aware that, on Friday, First Milk communicated with its Scottish suppliers, reducing the price of milk by 0.2p a litre, which is very serious. Even more serious, the price paid to the 13 Bute producers has been reduced by 1.2p a litre, making it just over 16p a litre. That is utterly uneconomic and disastrous. It also breaches what the co-operative has done up to now, which is pay everybody the same price for their milk. The reason that was given to the Bute farmers was the cost of transportation, but the price reduction suggests that the cost of transportation is between £350,000 and £400,000 a year—nearly double the actual cost of transportation.

The reduction is deeply resented in Bute, where there is a huge amount of anger. The director of First Milk attended a meeting on Sunday and, I think, realised that. It is very important that the committee understands what First Milk is doing, particularly as it appears to be a threat to the viability of dairy farming in Bute.

The Convener: Thank you for that. We previously agreed to discuss our work programme in private, and I suggest that we discuss that

matter in private during that item, when we will review other issues that we have dealt with before.

Is the committee agreed to take the letter on mandatory public sector climate change reporting in private?

Members indicated agreement.

Subordinate Legislation

Climate Change (Additional Greenhouse Gas) (Scotland) Order 2015 [draft]

10:03

The Convener: Item 2 is subordinate legislation. The committee will consider the draft Climate Change (Additional Greenhouse Gas) (Scotland) Order 2015, which is laid under affirmative procedure. That means that Parliament must approve the order before its provisions can come into force. Following the evidence session, the committee will be invited to consider a motion to recommend the approval of the order under item 3.

I welcome the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform, Dr Aileen McLeod, and George Burgess, the deputy director of the Scottish Government's environmental quality division. I invite the minister to speak to the order.

The Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (Aileen McLeod): Good morning and thank you for inviting me to discuss the draft Climate Change (Additional Greenhouse Gas) (Scotland) Order 2015.

The order adds nitrogen trifluoride to the list of greenhouse gases that are covered by the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 and designates 1995 as the baseline year against which progress to reduce emissions will be measured. The addition means that emissions of nitrogen trifluoride will be accounted for in determining progress towards the emissions reduction targets that are set under the act.

Nitrogen trifluoride is a potent greenhouse gas that is highly effective in trapping atmospheric heat. Every tonne of nitrogen trifluoride that is emitted into the atmosphere has a warming potential that is equivalent to that of 17,200 tonnes of carbon dioxide.

Globally, the level of nitrogen trifluoride emissions is small but rising. In recognition of the impact on climate change, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change has added nitrogen trifluoride to the list of Kyoto greenhouse gases for the second Kyoto commitment period, which runs from 2013 to 2020. It should therefore be reported in national inventories. In light of international agreement, Scottish ministers sought advice from the United Kingdom Committee on Climate Change, which advised that it is appropriate that Scotland's contribution to meeting the global climate objective should include domestic nitrogen trifluoride emissions.

In the UK, nitrogen trifluoride is emitted in extremely small quantities and its only source is

the semiconductor manufacture industry. The UK Committee on Climate Change has advised that UK emissions of nitrogen trifluoride are currently equivalent to less than 1,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide per year, with no significant rises expected before 2050. Inclusion of nitrogen trifluoride in Scotland's accounting will not require any changes to emissions reduction targets in legislation. Scottish greenhouse gas emissions data for 2013 will be published in June and will include nitrogen trifluoride for the first time. The order will require those emissions to be included in determining progress towards the targets that are set under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009. Adding nitrogen trifluoride to the list of targeted gases under the 2009 act will ensure consistency with international agreements and is consistent with UK Committee on Climate Change advice.

I commend the draft Climate Change (Additional Greenhouse Gas) (Scotland) Order to the committee and I am happy to answer any questions that the committee may have.

The Convener: Thank you, minister. Do members have any questions?

Graeme Dey (Angus South) (SNP): I think that the minister has answered this question, but I want to be clear. Changes to the reporting baseline have contributed to our failure to meet our reduction targets. Is there any significant potential for this move to have the same effect or to add to the problem?

Aileen McLeod: No. Emissions of nitrogen trifluoride are estimated using a UK-wide model and we will not know the level of nitrogen trifluoride emissions in Scotland until the 2013 greenhouse gas emissions data are published in June. However, as I said in my opening remarks, the UK Committee on Climate Change advises that, at the UK level, emissions of nitrogen trifluoride are currently equivalent to less than 1 kilotonne of carbon dioxide per year, with no significant rises expected before 2050.

Michael Russell: This probably comes into the category of unknown unknowns, to use Donald Rumsfeld's phrase, but I will ask the question anyway. It seems unusual to add more gases to the package. Are other gases being considered for addition, or are there unknown issues that are constantly being thought about? People may be slightly surprised that, at this stage, we are adding gases to the list of those that we are concerned about.

Aileen McLeod: I will give the committee a wee bit of background. In its second phase, the Kyoto protocol limits developed countries' emissions of seven greenhouse gases that are released by human activities. Those are carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide and the four types of

fluorated gases that are being developed specifically for industrial applications. Certain other industrial gases, such as chlorofluorocarbons and hydrochlorofluorocarbons, contribute to global warming and the depletion of the ozone layer but they are not covered by the Kyoto protocol because they are being phased out under the Montreal protocol on protecting the ozone layer.

Michael Russell: In other words, this might be the end of the matter. You do not imagine that other gases will be added to the list unless they are developed for manufacturing purposes.

George Burgess (Scottish Government): Your comment about its being an unknown unknown is apposite. When the Kyoto protocol was introduced, there was virtually no use of nitrogen trifluoride in the semiconductor industry. Other gases that were used, such as hexafluoroethane, were identified as potent ozone-depleting substances and industry therefore moved towards using nitrogen trifluoride, which does not have that effect on the ozone layer. Now, industry is moving to using a different set of gases—elemental fluorine, in particular—that have neither of the harmful effects.

Michael Russell: You are talking about manufactured gases that are now considered to be damaging.

George Burgess: Yes.

Michael Russell: Not only ozone depletion but other considerations are now taken into account in the manufacture of new gases.

George Burgess: Yes.

Michael Russell: Thank you.

The Convener: The impacts of particular gases are being reassessed, and there is a strengthening of our targeting of the increase in parts per 1,000 of methane according to the target lists of the UK Climate Change Committee and the Scottish Government. Would you say that that toughening of the targets raises big questions about the need for the creators of these gases and the industries that use them to play a major part in ensuring that we reduce the emissions of such harmful gases? Is that part of how the Government will meet the targets that the Parliament set in 2009?

George Burgess: The simple answer is yes. The global warming potential of methane has been uprated from 21 to 25, so it is now considered to be 25 times more potent than carbon dioxide. We therefore need to look more closely at the main methane emitters that contribute to our Scottish inventory, particularly agriculture and waste management. A considerable amount of work is already being done in both those areas, and we will look at the issue ever more closely.

One of the issues that we need to address in relation to peatland, on which there was a parliamentary debate yesterday, is the fact that although, in the long term, it is very good at storing carbon dioxide, in the initial stages of restoration there is a small methane spike. We need to balance those effects as we go forward and consider how we count the benefits of peatland rewetting.

The Convener: We need to try to focus on NF₃.

Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab): This exchange has been useful in flagging up that this new issue needs to be on the agenda for business and agriculture when we come to the report on proposals and policies. We can explore the matter when we get to that point later in the year.

We need to approve the order. More scientific information is now available, and the challenge for us, as people who scrutinise what the Government does, is to see how it fits with the challenge for the Government and, more widely, the challenge for business, industry and agriculture. If we approve the order today, people tackling climate change will have another challenge.

The Convener: As members have no further comments, we move to agenda item 3, which is consideration of motion S4M-13047, which asks the committee to recommend approval of the order. We have a lot of time to discuss the matter if required, but I hope that we do not need it. I invite the minister to move the motion.

Motion moved,

That the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee recommends that the Climate Change (Additional Greenhouse Gas) (Scotland) Order 2015 [draft] be approved.—[*Aileen McLeod.*]

Motion agreed to.

The Convener: I thank Aileen McLeod and her official.

At its next meeting on 13 May, the committee will consider two negative instruments: the Welfare of Animals at the Time of Killing (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2015 (SSI 2015/161)—I hear someone say, “Haud me back”—and the Common Agricultural Policy Non-IACS Support Schemes (Appeals) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2015 (SSI 2015/167). The committee will also consider a draft letter to the Scottish Government on mandatory public sector climate change reporting.

As we agreed at a previous meeting, the committee will now move into private session to consider its work programme

10:15

Meeting continued in private until 10:57.

Members who would like a printed copy of the *Official Report* to be forwarded to them should give notice to SPICe.

Available in e-format only. Printed Scottish Parliament documentation is published in Edinburgh by APS Group Scotland.

All documents are available on
the Scottish Parliament website at:

www.scottish.parliament.uk

For details of documents available to
order in hard copy format, please contact:
APS Scottish Parliament Publications on 0131 629 9941.

For information on the Scottish Parliament contact
Public Information on:

Telephone: 0131 348 5000
Textphone: 0800 092 7100
Email: sp.info@scottish.parliament.uk

e-format first available
ISBN 978-1-78568-514-9

Revised e-format available
ISBN 978-1-78568-521-7