

Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee

15th Meeting, 2021 (Session 6), Tuesday,
21 December 2021

Evidence session on Climate Change Committee – Annual Progress Report

Note by the clerk

Introduction

1. The Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee will hear from the UK Climate Change Committee (CCC) on its annual progress report to the Scottish Parliament, published 7 December 2021 – [‘Progress reducing emissions in Scotland – 2021 Report to Parliament.’](#)
2. This is the tenth annual progress report to the Scottish Parliament as required by the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009.
3. The Committee will hear evidence from:
 - Chris Stark, Chief Executive, Climate Change Committee;
 - Professor Keith Bell, Scottish member, Climate Change Committee.

Key messages

4. The CCC report contains several key messages, including that:
 - ‘The Scottish Government has set laudable ambitions for emissions reductions in its Climate Change Plan update, supported to some extent by funding announcements in the most recent Programme for Government.
 - A comprehensive, detailed policy framework must now be completed, so the focus can be on implementation and delivery of real-world progress.
 - While the Climate Change Plan update sets out pathways for sectoral emissions to 2032 that meet the legislated targets, we have not been able to establish whether and how policies and proposals add up to the required emissions reductions.

- Annual targets during the 2020s will be very difficult to meet, even with the strongest climate policies.
 - Climate policy in Scotland must focus on the transition to Net Zero and the need for rapid progress by 2030.
 - The Climate Change Plan update sets out extremely ambitious plans for reducing emissions from the transport sector. Urgent steps should be taken to ensure that emissions savings achieved through the response to the pandemic are locked in.
 - There is still an urgent need for post-CAP low-carbon agriculture policy. The Scottish Government will be introducing an Agriculture Bill in 2023, which will have to be sufficiently ambitious. A clear plan to move to healthy and low-carbon diets is also needed.
 - The Climate Change Plan update's ambition for 2030 relies on a substantial contribution from engineered greenhouse gas removals (GGRs), but recent developments in UK climate policy increase the uncertainty around their timely delivery. Clear contingencies will have to be developed for meeting the 2030 target if it should turn out that GGRs cannot be delivered at scale on the necessary timetable.
 - The Scottish Government has made ambitious commitments in some areas that require going ahead of the UK-wide Net Zero pathway, often in areas where policy is not clearly devolved to Scotland.'
5. Overall, the report is clear that the focus 'must now shift to ensuring that rapid emissions reductions are delivered with no further delay to allow Scotland to meet its legislated 2030 target.' As the CCC note in their accompanying [press release](#): 'With most of the key policy levers in the hands of Scottish Ministers, consultations and strategies must quickly turn into implementation and rapid emissions reductions.'
6. Alongside the report, the CCC have published an annex with over 70 key recommendations to support Scotland's transition to net zero (which can be found here - [Annex-Progress-reducing-emissions-in-Scotland-2021-Report-to-Parliament-.pdf \(theccc.org.uk\)](#)), as well as supporting charts and data (which can be found here - [Progress reducing emissions in Scotland - 2021 Report to Parliament - Climate Change Committee \(theccc.org.uk\)](#)).

Evidence session and next steps

7. This evidence session also offers the Committee an opportunity to pursue some of the key themes arising from the evidence session on Carbon Capture, Utilisation and Storage (CCUS), held on 14 December. On this, the CCC include the following information in the key messages section of the executive summary:

‘Engineered greenhouse gas removals (GGR). The Climate Change Plan update’s ambition for 2030 relies on a substantial contribution from GGR, using carbon capture and storage (CCS). The UK Government recently announced that the proposed Scottish CCS cluster is only a reserve project, behind the two ‘Track 1’ clusters in the North of England. Although further clusters are expected to follow, failure of the Scottish CCS cluster to secure Track 1 support raises important questions about whether the CCS infrastructure and GGR facilities can now be developed in time to be operational by 2030. The Scottish Government must make a quick decision on whether to continue to plan for removals to contribute to the 2030 target or to change course. Clear contingency plans will have to be developed for meeting the 2030 target if it should turn out that GGR cannot be delivered at scale on the necessary timetable, accompanied by a clear date – no later than 2023 – to implement these contingency plans if developments on CCS do not provide confidence that they can deliver by 2030.’

8. Following the evidence session, the Committee will discuss the evidence heard and any potential next steps as a result.