



PCS Submission on the Scottish Climate Change bill – Committee on Climate Change Call for Evidence

1. Introduction

1.1 PCS trade union has around 180,000 members working in the civil service, public sector and on privatised, commercial contracts. Around 25,000 of our members are based in Scotland ranging from Ministry of Defence, DWP, HMRC, to the Scottish Courts and Tribunal Services. This also include around 3,500 members working in Scottish Government covering the length and breadth of Scotland in direct delivery of public services to policy development and drafting legislation.

1.2 PCS has a wide policy agenda on climate change and energy to which *energy democracy* in terms of 100% renewable energy provision under public ownership and control is central. We also support the campaign for One Million Climate Jobs, jobs that lower greenhouse gas emissions. Alongside this we are a co-signatory to the joint statement on Just Transition along with the STUC, CWU, UCU, Unite, Unison, Friends of the Earth and WWF.¹

1.3 As a union representing members in Government providing the framework policy and governance role in achieving a zero carbon economy, we are particularly interested in proposals for the reconfiguration of the UK energy system. In both terms of what it means for our members jobs and for them as consumers.

1.4. We also have an extensive network of workplace environmental representatives (WERs) or 'green' reps who seek to work with the employer on environmental and sustainability issues. PCS believes workers are key to the transformations we need to make in achieving the transition to a zero carbon economy. In line with the Fair Work Convention² which advocates for effective worker voice and representation, statutory recognition rights should be accorded to WERs to ensure our public sector workplaces become not just exemplars of good practice, but that employees and unions are active participants in transition plans across all sectors of the economy.

1.5 PCS welcomes the high level of ambition proposed for the Scottish Climate Change Bill and the lead it is showing as a devolved nation to the overall UK climate change commitments. The nationally determined contributions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions submitted to the Paris 2015 climate talks show that globally we remain on course to reach 4 degrees Celsius of global warming by end of the century. The ambition of the Paris

¹ Please see <http://www.foe-scotland.org.uk/Joint-Statement-Just-Transition>

² <http://www.fairworkconvention.scot/index.html>

agreement to stay well below 2 degrees – or better 1.5 degrees – of global warming is already set to be missed.

1.6 On leaving the European Union, the UK will also need to decouple its targets from the EU. High ambition at the devolved level will help to put pressure on the UK wide government to do the same, not least as Scotland will likely become a net exporter of renewable energy.

1.7 PCS strongly believes that climate change and reducing greenhouse gas emissions is central to all Government policy. In support of this, we call for the creation of a National Climate Service (NCS) akin to the NHS that has oversight for the transition to a zero carbon economy. Whilst we envisage a specific ministry for this falling within UK Central Government, we also believe that the energy transition required calls for new institutions at regional and national level. As such, we therefore support a call for a climate change or Just Transition Commission within the Scotland Government to provide further oversight and coordination in line with Scotland's commitments to achieving a zero carbon economy.

1.8 Below we set out more detailed responses to the broad questions addressed in the call for evidence.

2. Appropriate level of future emissions (“targets”)

2.1 Q4 & Q5. We start here as we believe given the current trajectory of warming we are on, and globally low level of ambition in achieving the Paris Climate agreement, the 2050 target for Scotland (and the whole UK) should be zero carbon emissions by 2050.

2.2 PCS believes that climate change should be central to the transformation of our energy system. The targets provide a basis around which all other policy should be framed and therefore interim targets (Q2) are also key to achieving this. However targets alone do not achieve the change we need as they can also be a disincentive to do today what can be done tomorrow.

2.3 For example, decarbonising electricity is easier than addressing decarbonisation of the gas sector on which a large amount of space heating still depends. It can also make it technology dependent. This we are seeing this in the aviation industry which falls outside of the Paris climate agreement and where the UN ICAO³ has again deferred serious action on aviation emissions in the hope of a techno fix sometime in the future.

2.4 To this end, therefore whilst targets are useful to monitor progress, they need to be used to do just that and be adjusted to ensure are on track for a zero carbon emissions goal of 2050.

2.5 PCS advocate the following ways to increase emissions reductions to meet more ambitious targets for both 2020 and 2050:

- i. **Public ownership and control of energy and related infrastructure** with aim to transition to 100% renewable energy by 2050. PCS does not believe that

³ <http://www.icao.int/Newsroom/Pages/Historic-agreement-reached-to-mitigate-international-aviation-emissions.aspx>

- reliance on private sector investment alone will ensure the scale and pace of change needed to meet immediate or long-term future zero energy targets;
- ii. **Decentralisation of energy infrastructure** to enable different spatial and mode of energy generation and supply, including community energy. Local energy networks can address grid problems and provide solutions to those outlined in the September 2016 Progress report (page 39) on reducing emissions.
 - iii. Establish a **climate change or Just Transition Commission** within the Scotland Government to provide central oversight and coordination to achieving a zero carbon economy. We believe this is critical to ensuring all Government policy is in tune with meeting both emissions reduction targets and ensuring a just transition to a zero carbon economy for workers and communities.
 - iv. **Statutory rights for Workplace Environmental Reps (WERs)**. Workers are key to the transformations needed and can play a vital role in their workplaces raising awareness on environmental issues. Negotiating sustainable workplace policy for example around waste and recycling, energy use with energy efficient buildings, travel to work policies, can cut emissions and costs. They also help to transfer a culture of sustainability within the local community and at home and therefore helping “behaviour change”. For example they can play a role in ensuring the success of policies such as achieving “effective travel plans in workplaces with more than 30 employees” (see page 69 Reducing emissions in Scotland 2016 progress report).
 - v. **Just transition plan**: workers and communities need to be supported through the energy transition and inevitable impacts that will come in the way we live and work. The Transition Training Fund⁴ for oil and gas workers is a start but it needs to go further. There needs to be a programme for all workers who will be impacted by the change including in retraining and skills for a renewable energy sector and retrofitting and insulation of buildings as part of broad energy efficiency measures.
 - vi. Workers need to be consulted and participate in designing transition plans. There needs to be an immediate mapping across the whole economy to assess what the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) define as the “Quantitative Impacts of climate policies on employment”: job creation; job substitution; job elimination; job transformation and redefinition as they impact direct, indirect and induced employment.
 - vii. New jobs need to be *decent* jobs that pay a living wage, have good terms and conditions, are unionised and provide equal opportunities for all.
 - viii. **Social justice and equity** should be at the heart of this transition and how targets are met, and particular measures should be considered for those communities most impacted by industrial change. For example in Aberdeen where the fall in oil prices has already seen mass lay-off of workers, falling house prices and numbers at foodbanks rising.⁵
 - ix. **Aviation** needs to be brought within the wider climate targets regardless of international agreements.
 - x. **Transport** needs to be decarbonised with great investment in public transport brought back under public ownership.

⁴ <https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/news-events/2016/may/transition-training-fund-offers-support-to-oil-and-gas-workers/>

⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/jan/23/aberdeen-once-rich-oil-city-now-relying-on-food-banks>

3. Duration and form of future carbon targets (one year or multi-year, absolute or percentage)

3.1 Whilst recognising the problems of one year carbon targets, given the short time-frame and scale to meet zero carbon emissions, it seems prescient to maintain a year on year approach. However as the Paris climate change agreement calls for each party to “communicate a nationally determined contribution every five years” (see Article 4;9)⁶ there will undoubtedly need to be a combination of the two in order to contribute to the UK wide contribution (once separated from the EU).

3.2 Similarly in terms of absolute or percentage emissions. The UK carbon budget is measured in both absolute and percentage terms of which Scotland forms a part. Despite the difficulties of presenting targets in absolute terms with reference to greenhouse gas inventory changes, they are more representative of what is happening on reducing emissions. Percentages may be presentationally easier to publically digest as a measurement of “success” but they also do not necessarily show the reality of mitigation measures. For example, a reduction in public sector buildings emissions can be related to reduction in public sector estate holdings and where emissions are being recorded.

3.3. Clearly adjustments are needed to reflect “uncertainties” that impact emissions particularly around agriculture and land use and factored into reporting.

4. Future accounting framework and criteria for setting future targets

4.1. Emissions trading schemes are false carbon accounting and PCS do not believe that market based mechanisms for reducing greenhouse gas emissions is the right approach. It is clear that some sectors such as heavy industry will find it harder to reach solutions than buildings emissions for example where energy efficiency measures can be applied, but these should be the focus of greater investment to research alternatives.

4.2 While the ‘cap and trade’ mechanism supposes to build in a carbon emissions reduction plan overall through pricing, the reality is that since this system has been in place it has not resulted in reductions in carbon emissions. In fact carbon emissions have increased.

4.3 This links to questions about how to quantify carbon and as such, how national budgets are seen as part of a global budget. Rather than the biggest polluters benefitting from low carbon initiatives elsewhere in the world, they should be making the most strident efforts to reduce their own carbon. The remaining *global* emissions budget if we are to stay within 2 degrees of global warming will be needed to help bring reliable and adequate energy sources to the nearly 3 billion of the world’s population who are still reliant on wood and charcoal to cook and heat. Therefore our *just transition* decisions need not only to ensure justice and equity for communities in Scotland but within the global community.

4.4 Scotland does not have heavy industry but emissions from agriculture and land use play a more significant role, not least in respect of methane and nitrogen emissions. The Reducing Emissions Scotland 2016 progress Report outlined a number of areas to improve reduction of emissions in this area. A further step will be therefore to take an early decision to ban the exploration and extraction of shale oil and gas, otherwise known as fracking.

⁶ http://unfccc.int/files/essential_background/convention/application/pdf/english_paris_agreement.pdf

4.5 Whilst arguments are made about relatively lower carbon from natural gas, it is a high emitter of methane. With a developed shale oil and gas industry in the US, there is a mass of evidence that among many concerns is the contribution fracking will make to climate change. Last year (2016) a “surge” in the global methane emissions was reported⁷ and research has linked this to rise in fracking.⁸

4.6 Therefore a criteria for setting future targets would appear to be not to embark on new fossil fuel extraction programmes such as fracking which would require offsets to be made elsewhere in the economy. Linked to this is the inclusion in the criteria also of “loss and damage” as set out in Article 8 of the Climate Change agreement.

5. Conclusion

5.1 PCS welcome the high ambition that the Scottish Government is setting out to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions, and the lead it has shown to date within the UK on developing its renewables sector. However we do not believe the scale and pace of change can be met without direct government intervention which puts all energy under public control and ownership, along with a serious industrial plan that ensure a just transition for workers and communities.

5.2. This can be achieved by establishing a climate change or just transition commission to oversee the transformations needed and which puts justice for workers and the community at its heart.

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31 January 2017

⁷ <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/dec/12/rapid-rise-methane-emissions-10-years-surprises-scientists>

⁸ <http://www.independent.co.uk/environment/fracking-to-prompt-sharp-rise-in-greenhouse-gas-emissions-study-says-a6928126.html>