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Parliamentary Briefing

MEMBERS DEBATE: IPCC SPECIAL REPORT ON 1.5 DEGREES

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SUMMARY

WWF Scotland welcomes the opportunity for Members to debate the implications of the recent IPCC Special Report on 1.5 degrees. The report highlighted significant impacts for Scotland and the world if we do not take urgent action on climate change:

- The world is currently on course to significantly exceed 1.5°C of global warming.
- Keeping global temperature rises to 1.5°C is vital to limit the devastating impact climate change will have on people, planet and nature.
- Keeping below 1.5°C warming is feasible but requires “rapid and far-reaching” action.
- Wealthier countries must do their fair share of climate action to achieve this.

The Climate Change Bill does not go far enough for Scotland to do its fair share to limit warming to 1.5°C:

- The IPCC report highlighted the urgent need for increased, early action, as the best chance to keep warming below 1.5°C. However, the Climate Bill does not increase Scotland's ambition or action between now and 2030.
- IPCC Lead Author Jim Skea said to play its fair part in keeping warming to 1.5°C, “A country such as Scotland should aim for [net-zero carbon a little earlier than the 2040-70 bracket.” However, the Scottish Government says its Climate Bill as introduced does not achieve net-zero carbon until 2050.

This debate is an opportunity for members to:

- Make clear that the Scottish Parliament supports ambitious and urgent climate change action, including an intention to keep warming below 1.5°C;
- Discuss what is needed in the Climate Change Bill to bring Scotland in line with meeting the Paris Agreement goals, and to limit warming to 1.5°C; and
- Highlight areas where increased policy action is needed, (e.g. energy efficiency, transport, agriculture and the circular economy) and suggest proposed solutions.

A WORLD LEADING SCOTLAND

"A country such as Scotland should...aim for [net-zero *carbon*] a little earlier than the 2040 to 2070 bracket in order to make a reasonable and fair contribution to the global aim."

Professor Jim Skea, IPCC

With the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Bill currently progressing through Scottish Parliament, Scotland has the opportunity now to lead the way and commit to action that brings it in line with a 1.5°C target and the Paris Agreement. By doing so it could be one of the first countries to make such a commitment and would set an example to push others to do the same.

The Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (ECCLR) Committee is currently taking evidence on the Climate Change Bill. So far, the evidence has highlighted some key themes:

- Tackling climate change action now should be a priority for ensuring a future sustainable economy;
- We need short-term action now to underpin long-term ambition *and to reduce cumulative emissions and impacts. Early action is vital to limit warming;*
- As a developed country we have a moral imperative to be more ambitious;
- Setting stretching targets would help to drive innovation and signal to business and industry the need for urgency and prompt action;
- The current targets in the Climate Change Bill will unlikely keep warming to 1.5°C;
- We need short term action now to underpin long term ambition; and
- Sectoral action should be supported by financial incentives.

As noted by Professor Jim Skea in Committee this month, one of the authors of the IPCC report below, the Climate Change Bill falls short of the principles contained in the Paris Agreement:

The Paris agreement says that developed countries should aspire to hit net zero before developing countries. Combining the Paris agreement and the IPCC conclusions, it would be suggested that a country such as Scotland should probably aim for something a little earlier than the 2040 to 2070 bracket in order to make a reasonable and fair contribution to the global aim of net zero."

Professor Jim Skea. IPCC, Evidence to the ECCLR Committee on 23rd November 2018

Jim Skea's evidence also drew attention to the fact that feasibility barriers to globally limiting warming to 1.5°C are political, rather than technological or geophysical. With a strong tradition of research and innovation, and blessed with natural advantages in both renewable energy and in negative emissions potential (especially for tree planting, peatland restoration and blue carbon), Scotland should be leading the global transition to a climate-neutral economy, and should aim to end its contribution to climate change by 2050 at the latest. But this will require strong political leadership and the support of all parties.

In order to limit warming to 1.5°C and to bring Scotland in line with the Paris Agreement, WWF Scotland, along with members of the SCCS coalition, believes that the Bill could, and should:

- Set a net-zero climate emissions target for 2050 at the latest,
- Set a 2030 target of 77%,
- Align finance budgets with climate targets, and;
- Progress policy action, especially in energy efficiency and agriculture.

1.5°C VS. 2°C

The higher above 1.5°C we go the more likely it is that the effects will be irreversible and adaptation measures will have limited impact.

Humanity's actions have already warmed the planet by approximately 1°C since pre-industrial times, and we are already seeing the impacts of this, even in Scotland with extreme and erratic weather patterns. Even an increase in global average warming to 1.5°C cannot be regarded as "safe" but it still poses significantly less threats than 2°C.

The higher above 1.5°C we go the more likely it is that the effects will be irreversible and adaptation measures will have limited impact. For example, many inhabited areas will become uninhabitable forcing significant migration, and the loss of species and biodiversity will be catastrophic. Some of the different implications in these scenarios are highlighted in Appendix 1.

Globally, current country pledges under the Paris Agreement slow the rate of increase of emissions but would still lead to a temperature rise of around 3°C by the end of the century. The IPCC Special Report on 1.5°C must therefore act as a clarion call to all nations to increase their action and put in place the measures that will limit global warming and protect people and nature from the worst impacts of climate change.

The IPCC Special Report on 1.5 makes a clear conclusion that the whole world needs to get to net-zero carbon emissions by 2050 – broadly equivalent to the provisions of the Climate Change Bill as introduced. But if we, as an advanced economy, are to take any account of fairness and justice concepts, are to secure the economic benefits from first-mover advantage from leading the transition to a zero-carbon economy and are to fulfil the rhetoric of being world-leading, then Scotland should aim to reach net-zero carbon well before 2050, and achieve net-zero emissions for all greenhouse gases by 2050 at the latest.

It is not currently clear what temperature target the Scottish Government and the Climate Bill are aiming towards—currently the Policy Memorandum for the Bill refers to both 1.5°C and 2°C and the Environment Strategy Discussion Paper refers to the 'below 2°C target. The Scottish Government has referred to the advice of the CCC on the Bill, but the current advice on the Bill used 'overshoot and return to 1.5°C' assumptions' (where global average temperatures rise by more than 1.5 but then fall again). However, the IPCC has warned of the much more severe impacts to nature and biodiversity, of overshoot

scenarios – with consequential impacts for the social and economic systems that rely on them.

If Scotland is to deliver its fair share of 1.5°C, then the Bill does not go far enough to achieve this ambition, and if the target is for below 2°C then ambition does not match up with the rhetoric of being world leading or what is needed at a global level.

GETTING TO 2030: IMMEDIATE ACTION FOR LONG-TERM GAIN

“For each year we delay action it halves the likelihood of limiting warming to 1.5°C.”

Professor Piers Forster, University of Leeds, Co-Author of IPCC Special Report

The IPCC report highlighted that urgent short-term action is needed between now and 2030 in order to prevent a ‘tipping point’ rise. If we reach a higher level of warming and overshoot, the cost of adaptation will be higher. It is therefore cost effective to take strong action now, and economically sensible to invest in measures to reduce emissions now.

“The more we do now, the bigger the effect will be, and the more we put off now, the more expensive and the less effective it will be”

Lord Deben, UKCCC, Evidence to the ECCLR Committee on 23rd November 2018

It is a missed opportunity that the Climate Bill does not introduce new policy action to cut emissions. Policy options exist that could be implemented now in Scotland that would help to both cut emissions over the next 10 to 15 years and deliver social and economic benefits.

The Scottish Government’s independent advisers on climate change, the Committee on Climate Change (CCC), were clear in their recent Scotland Progress Report that “Scotland’s progress in reducing emissions from the electricity sector masks a lack of action in other areas, particularly agriculture, transport, forestry and land use”, and that policies in these areas “need to improve” if we are to hit emissions targets through to 2032. Everyone in Scotland should be rightly proud that we have achieved a 45% emissions reduction since 1990, but that record of leadership will not continue without renewed action. There are socially and economically positive policy options available in all these sectors:

- In agriculture, mandatory regulations on the application of fertiliser could prevent excess application, saving farmers money and preventing environmentally damaging runoff. Financial incentives to support the purchase of more precise machinery would achieve similar aims.
- In buildings, a more ambitious goal for Scotland’s Energy Efficiency Programme, could help all homes in Scotland achieve at least an EPC band C by 2030, tackling fuel poverty, reducing spending on home heating energy and creating thousands of jobs.

- In transport, more action to encourage walking, cycling, public transport and electric vehicles would help cut transport emissions and reduce air pollution.

The CCC’s recent Scotland Progress Report recommended that, “The Scottish Government should set out where further carbon savings could be made across sectors, as a contingency should a more stretching target be set (whether now or later), revisions to the LULUCF sink make current targets harder to achieve, or policy measures underperform against targets in some sectors.” This also suggests that the CCC may not see existing plans as being at the limit of what can reasonably be achieved through to 2032.

WWF has undertaken analysis looking at already published official sectoral emission reduction projections through to 2032 from the CCC, and from the Scottish Government in the draft and final versions of the Climate Change Plan. The analysis combined the most ambitious but credible scenarios for each sector and found that a ‘realistic’ combination scenario could achieve a 73% reduction by 2032, and 79% in an ‘ambitious’ combination scenario, using only existing official sectoral scenarios. Achieving these envelopes would require substantial new policy effort, but well within the boundaries of what is technically, economically and socially feasible. Between the draft and final Climate Change Plan the Scottish Government received a windfall of emission reductions from changes to accounting in the Land Use sector, but used this to row back on ambition in other sectors – key to achieving the higher emission reductions would be to not do this scaling back of action.

NEW CCC ADVICE COMMISSIONED

With the IPCC report making it clear that an urgent increase in action is required from all actors if average global warming is to be kept to 1.5°C, we welcome that the Scottish and UK Governments have sought new advice from the UK Committee on Climate Change (UKCCC). The Scottish Government has since provided welcome clarity that it expects the CCC to provide new advice on all of the targets under consideration in the Climate Change Bill, including those between now and 2032.

We expect the CCC to provide new advice next year which comprehensively reviews all aspects of the current advice. The current CCC advice on the Climate Bill is based on underlying analysis which dates back to 2015/6. There are a number of assumptions in that advice, including for example that Scotland will still have fossil-fuel electricity generation and fossil-fuel cars on the road in 2050, that we believe are not at the limits of technical feasibility, and where we believe future CCC advice is likely to go further.

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