

Sustainable Development Commission submission to the Joint Committee on the Draft Climate Change Bill

1. The Joint Committee on the Draft Climate Change Bill (the Committee) issued a call for evidence on 1 May 2007. The call for evidence was scoped around 11 questions.
2. This note is the Sustainable Development Commission's (SDC) submission to the inquiry. It does not cover all of the questions raised by the Committee's call for evidence. Instead, we make some general observations about the bill and focus on two of the questions posed by the Committee.

General comments

3. Current methods of dealing with climate change are incompatible with the scale of the task at hand. Climate change is a cross-departmental issues with huge implications for all areas of public policy.
4. The SCD is very supportive of the Secretary of State's vision on climate change. This puts the UK in a global leadership role and creates a lead that other Governments must now follow.
5. We also support the formation of the proposed Committee on Climate Change (CCC) and would hope to see this take on some executive functions after an initial transitional period.

Response to specific questions

6. The Committee asked "Whether it is possible for the Government to regulate total UK emissions through the use of emissions trading schemes and other policy instruments, and whether carbon budgets over five years are the most effective way of doing so" (Q4).
7. We are supportive of the Government's intention to create five-year carbon budgets. This is the most sensible approach as it is consistent with the timing of both the Kyoto Protocol and the EU Emissions Trading Scheme (EU ETS), although this should be adjusted if international conditions change. Five-yearly budgets also allow for annual fluctuations due to factors outside the Government's control (for example, extreme weather patterns or changes in relative fuel prices).
8. The need for a long-term policy framework for reducing carbon emissions is clear and this would create the certainty required by business to make long-term investments in low carbon technologies and industries. The SDC has previously recommended (for example, in our response to the 2006 Energy Review) that economy-wide emissions trading should be the policy framework within which action on climate change takes place. Our view is that this is the only way that the necessary certainty can be achieve through all parts of the economy.
9. The EU ETS is a step towards a broader emissions trading scheme and we strongly support the introduction of the Carbon Reduction Commitment (previously called the Energy Performance Commitment) as another move towards economy-wide emissions trading. We are also

interested in the role that 'personal carbon trading' could play as part of this framework in the longer term.

10. The Committee also asked "Whether the target of 60% emissions reduction by 2050 set in the Bill is adequate, based on the most recent appropriate evidence" (Q5).
11. There is increasing recognition that the long-term target for a 60% cut in carbon emissions by 2050 will not be sufficient to avoid 'dangerous climate change'. It is also clear that climate change is not a 'long-term' problem that can be deferred for future generations to deal with. Climate change impacts are already being observed and the threat to global populations and ecosystems is real and immediate. We recognise that this target may have to increase but are satisfied with the measures the Government has taken to link this process to the wider international context.
12. As noted above, climate change impacts are already being observed and action is needed in the short-term to set us on the path to achieving the longer-term targets. We would welcome the inclusion of shorter term targets, which should be designed to achieve ambitious cuts in emissions over the next 15 or so years, consistent with a precautionary approach and designed to exemplify the UK's leadership role on this issue.

Sustainable Development Commission
25th May 2007