

**REPORT TO: POLICY COMMITTEE ON 30 APRIL 2008**

**SUBJECT: GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION ON PROPOSALS FOR A SCOTTISH CLIMATE CHANGE BILL AND PARTICIPATION IN REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP ON CLIMATE CHANGE**

**BY: DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES**

**1. REASON FOR REPORT**

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of and responses to the Scottish Government's Climate Change Bill which is currently out for consultation. It also offers the opportunity to advise the Committee of ongoing "climate change" work across the Council and of opportunities to work in partnership with neighbouring local authorities to achieve more substantial CO<sup>2</sup> reductions.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section A(49) of the Council's Administrative Scheme relating to risk assessment and management.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

**2.1 It is recommended that the Committee agree to:**

- **Note the contents of this report and agree to forward the comments in paras 4.4 - 4.6 as the Council's response to the Climate Change Bill consultation.**
- **Note the ongoing work throughout the Council to combat climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions.**
- **Agree in principle to entering into a voluntary partnership with Aberdeenshire Council and Aberdeen City Council to work together on a regional basis to mitigate against, and adapt to, the impacts of climate change.**

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 There is now little dispute that climate change is happening and man-made emissions are the main cause. Further climate change is now inevitable, and action is needed urgently to avert significant consequences. In Scotland there is expected to be an increase in the number of extreme rainfall or storm events which will have destructive potential on the natural environment, major infrastructure and the economy.
- 3.2 In 2006, the Stern Report on the economics of climate change established that the stabilisation of atmospheric greenhouse gases at a level that would avoid the more damaging effects of climate change would require a reduction

in emissions of 50 % compared to current levels. More recent developments have suggested that reductions of as much as 80% are needed.

- 3.3 Scotland's net emissions of CO<sup>2</sup> greenhouse gases in 2005 were over 54 million tonnes, approximately 0.2% of the world's CO<sup>2</sup> emissions and 0.15% of all greenhouse gas emissions due to human activities. However, when put in context Scotland has around 0.08% of the world's population and therefore produces a much greater average amount of emissions in proportion to its population. Furthermore, consumption in Scotland causes emissions in those countries that produce products on our behalf.

#### 4. THE PROPOSALS

##### 4.1 The Scottish Climate Change Bill

The Scottish Climate Change Bill is intended to provide a long-term framework for future action in Scotland. The Bill seeks to create mandatory climate change targets to reduce Scotland's emissions by 80% by 2050 and will create new legislation to do so.

##### 4.2 The key reasons for mandatory targets are:

- To ensure all decisions in Government and Business take account of climate change, setting a Scottish target for Scotland's situation.
- To create and enable new means of reducing emissions and adapting to climate change with primary legislation which will specify measures that will reduce emissions or help Scotland adapt the changing climate.
- To play our part on global action and climate change, with a commitment to lead the way on climate change to a new cleaner, greener and sustainable economy.

##### 4.3 The consultation document is divided into 4 main sections

- Targets – discusses methodology for measuring emissions
- Supporting Framework – considering the budgeting aspect both in terms of finance and emissions
- Reporting and Scrutinising Framework – Annual reporting and accountability in meeting targets
- Supporting Measures – Methods to assist in reaching targets

##### The Council's Proposed Response

- 4.4 The consultation has been framed around 33 questions posed throughout the document. Responses to them require a level of knowledge and expertise in issues such as legislative procedures and international carbon trading

schemes. For these reasons it is unrealistic to expect all local authorities to have formed detailed views.

4.5 As a general response to the Bill, the Council welcomes the Government's initiative in setting critical targets for greenhouse gas emission reductions. Climate change is an important cross cutting issue that requires measures to be embedded into the day to day business of all sectors. This document provides a starting point to hopefully facilitate long term change. Crucially, local authorities cannot act in isolation, and at the very least, partnerships need to be formed to tackle a global issue such as this.

4.6 In terms of the thrust of the questions posed, the Council considers that:

- The Climate Change Agenda needs to be informed by the most up to date scientific knowledge and technological advances.
- Targets and timescales need to be realistic and achievable to promote certainty.
- There also needs to be a degree of flexibility to allow for change and unforeseen events.
- The document focuses primarily on mitigation and appears divorced from adaptation.
- This document is at such a strategic level it requires to be quickly followed up by supplementary guidelines clearly focusing on the obligations expected of Local Authorities.
- There is no mention of the relationship between the Bill and the Scottish Climate Change Declaration signed by all 32 Local Authorities, which could form a useful basis for annual reporting.
- The Government should consider more incentives to take action.
- An independent scrutiny body would be best placed to monitor and report on progress.

4.7 What is the Council already doing?

The Council already has a number of initiatives in place making progress towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

- The Waste strategy and waste minimisation programme through extensive kerbside recycling
- Appointment of an Energy Officer to promote comprehensive energy management within the Council.
- Pilot scheme to raise awareness of energy efficiency throughout the Council
- "Green Electricity" – at present the Council's major electricity contract provides green electricity.
- Investigations into the use of biodiesel, biofuels and biomass fuel sources
- Preparation of a Renewables Strategy
- Eco-Schools Programme
- Preparation of green travel plans for schools and Elgin Council HQ

- Pilot Schemes for the use of renewables under the Home Energy Conservation Act achieving a reduction in fuel poverty, energy use and CO2 emissions

4.8 The Council's waste strategy has been highly successful in diverting significant volumes of waste from landfill and has resulted in extensive reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

4.9 The Council signed the Climate Change Declaration on 31 January 2007 (para 29 of the minute refers) (**Appendix A**) and in doing so made a commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Part of that commitment requires the Council to produce, and publicly declare, a Climate Change Action Plan, which ties together all current and future activities; provides a coherent framework for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions; and presents a more unified and consistent method for measuring and reporting outcomes.

#### 4.10 What next?

The first step in reducing emissions is to prepare and implement a Carbon Management Plan. At present the Carbon Trust is running a Local Authority Carbon Management Programme which provides technical and change management support and helps Councils to realise carbon emissions savings. Moray Council has been accepted into the Programme and work will begin in May 2008 for a 10-month period followed by plan implementation. The aim is to reduce emissions under the direct control of Councils, whether caused by energy use in buildings, street lighting, landfill waste or vehicle fleet. In producing this plan 5 of the 7 objectives within the Climate Change Declaration are met and therefore it forms an integral component of the Climate Change Action Plan.

#### 4.11 Regional Partnership Agreement with Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City

The Council has been invited to participate in a regional climate change partnership with Aberdeenshire Council and Aberdeen City (other bodies include NHS Grampian, Aberdeen University, Robert Gordon's University, SNH, Macaulay Institute). An officer has attended an initial meeting on behalf of the Council. The partnership agreement format will be based on the Edinburgh Partnership Agreement (**Appendix B**).

The reason for the group is that by combining larger organisations and drawing on shared resources, emission reductions may be possible. The overarching aim is to make the region carbon neutral by 2030. Climate change will have impacts at a regional level and instead of working in isolation authorities can work together to find solutions. It is worth noting that both Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City are some way ahead of Moray in terms of the Climate Change Agenda. Both authorities have completed the Local Authorities Carbon Management Programme. Aberdeen City was ahead of most Local Authorities and produced a Climate Change Action Plan in 2002. This Council can therefore benefit from their expertise to date.

## 5. **SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

### **(a) Corporate Development Plan/Community Plan/Service Improvement Plan**

Reducing greenhouse gas emissions will help achieve sustainable development, resource management and energy efficiency objectives of the Community Plan, the Corporate Plan and Service Plans.

### **(b) Policy and Legal**

Emissions reductions are consistent with the Scottish Governments "Greener" Strategy, Single Outcome Agreements, Scotland's Climate Change Programme, achieving sustainable development through Best Value and the Local Government Act 2003, and implementing the Climate Change Declaration.

### **(c) Resources (Financial, Risks, Staffing and Property)**

#### Financial

A reduction in greenhouse gas emissions should result in less energy use, thereby helping reduce expenditure.

#### Risks

The risks associated with climate change are recognised nationally. In signing the Climate Change Declaration the Council has acknowledged these risks and committed itself to taking action to address them.

#### Staffing

At present this is being absorbed within existing workloads of staff, but depending on any new legislation from the Bill, there may be further staff implications.

#### Property

The implications for Council property would be that greenhouse gas emission reduction facilitated by the Climate Change Action Plan and Carbon Management Plan would become a core principle of Asset Management with the aim of achieving energy efficient buildings and reduction in energy consumption.

**(d) Consultations**

The Chief Legal Officer, Energy Officer and Head of Estates have been consulted and comments incorporated in this report, any further comments will be reported at Committee.

**6. CONCLUSION**

- 6.1 The national long-term goal for significant reductions in greenhouse gases is consistent with the Council's own principles and those of the Community Planning Partnership. The Climate Change Bill provides a strategic context to inform the Climate Change Action Plan which in turn provides an opportunity to co-ordinate all the work that is already being done across the Council. The prospect of a regional partnership would facilitate a more pro-active and strategic approach to tackling climate change. It also benefits the Council to share the greater knowledge and experience of our neighbouring authorities.**

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Background Papers:  
Ref: EG