



WOODLAND TRUST SCOTLAND
comments to
The Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee
on
Legislative Consent Memorandum on the UK Climate Change Bill

The Woodland Trust Scotland (WTS) is pleased to be able to contribute to the request for views on the Legislative Consent Memorandum on the UK Climate Change Bill.

The comments that follow are delivered on behalf of the United Kingdom's leading woodland conservation charity. We achieve our purposes through acquiring woodland and sites for woodland regeneration, and wider advocacy of the importance of protecting ancient woodland, enhancing its biodiversity, expanding native woodland cover and increasing public enjoyment. In Scotland we own and manage 80 sites across 8,500 hectares.

1. Introduction.

We warmly welcome the introduction of the UK Climate Change Bill. We also welcome the clauses in the Bill relating to adaptation, which now offer the promise of a consistent and robust planning framework. However, to be effective at driving sustainable adaptation, the Bill needs to ensure it takes full account of the natural environment and the services it provides – such as flood alleviation, soil protection, air quality, health benefits.

WTS view to The Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee on the Legislative Consent Motion (LCM) : Climate Change is the greatest threat to our most biodiverse habitats. It is essential that adaptation to existing climate change is considered on the face of the Scotland Bill to ensure that biodiversity can thrive in future and the 2010 targets can be achieved. The LCM addresses the issue of mitigation but does not address the issue of adaptation and therefore we think falls short of addressing the complete picture.

2. Definition and aim.

The UK Bill would benefit from a clear definition of 'adaptation', and state the aims of the proposed adaptation programme – we think that it is an essential element for Scotland Bill, to ensure that both mitigation and adaptation are addressed.

A definition of adaptation that could be used for the Scotland Bill is one defined by the IPCC: "Adjustment in natural and human systems in response to actual and potential climatic stimuli and their effects, which mutually moderates harm and exploits beneficial opportunities". Government and public authority action programmes could then address these issues, with the specific aims of securing a healthy natural environment (including biodiversity, ecosystems and the services they provide) and delivering a strong, healthy and just society.

3. Sustainable Development.

We support the statement in the UK Bill, that the programme of action produced must contribute to sustainable development – we recommend that the Scotland Bill takes a similar approach.

4. Duty on Public Authorities

We understand that the UK Bill will oblige public authorities to produce adaptation plans – we think this is essential for the Scotland Bill. There is a strong case for the Scotland Bill to commit the Government to the production of Statutory Guidance for the production of adaptation plans; and make it clear that public bodies will be required to 'further' sustainable development.

4. Independent scrutiny.

We believe Government and public authorities should be subject to scrutiny from an independent body, when carrying out their duties in the Bill. Evidence from the Sustainable Development



Commission suggests that this kind of scrutiny is essential to ensure accurate delivery. In addition, this independent body could be given a power to appraise policies arising from any part of Government, for their impact on sustainable adaptation to climate change.

5. Programme and reporting cycle.

We would advocate a 4 year programme of risk assessment with a 'mid-term review' of each programme, to assess its efficacy, and contribution to sustainable development. That would align to Parliamentary terms. We would also like to see a requirement to make an annual statement on progress, at the same time as reports on progress towards meeting carbon budgets are made.

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