

Climate Change

The pressure is on: developing a blueprint for climate policy

The next two years are a crucial time for UK climate policy. The climate bill is about to enter parliament and is due to become an Act in Spring 2008. It will lock this, and future, governments into legally binding targets for carbon dioxide (CO₂) emission reductions for 2020 and 2050. The current targets are for a 26-32 per cent reduction in CO₂ emissions, from 1990 levels, by 2020 and a 50 per cent reduction by 2050.

UK emissions are rising. In our view the current package of policies is not going to be enough to meet the targets. A stronger set of policies will be needed to get us to where we need to be. The Green Alliance climate theme has been established to identify and advocate the key policy solutions that will be needed to meet the targets outlined in the climate bill, focussing initially on the 2020 target.

Our work is based around three core areas: the tools and frameworks needed to deliver the targets; making the case for a heat strategy; and developing a more ambitious approach to tackling emissions from large scale power stations. Alongside these core work streams we are also working in a number of other areas: international climate change, carbon trading, metering, transport, local government and climate change and smart homes.

Theme in more detail

Tools and frameworks: It is our view that the current policy framework will not deliver the emission reductions needed to meet the targets embodied in the climate bill. Through this work stream we will develop a view on the right market structure and tools to deliver the 2020 and 2050 targets. We will bring together experts in this area to put forward their opinion as to the framework that would work best and will publish a pamphlet of these key think pieces in Spring 2008.

Heat: Heat is the missing element of energy policy, which to date has almost solely focussed on electricity. The use of heat is responsible for 47 per cent of our carbon dioxide emissions and around half of our total energy use. Over the last 18 months we have worked to raise the profile of heat in the energy debate, and the government has started to take notice. This year's Energy White Paper took a more positive view of the role of heat and the government has commissioned the Office of Climate Change (OCC) to look at it in detail, due to report in the Autumn. Our work will focus on the need for government to develop a coherent heat strategy following on from the OCC work.

Power stations: Plans to develop a number of new coal fired power stations in the UK are currently being brought forward. None of the projects proposed include any abatement technology such as heat capture or carbon capture and storage. If these projects go ahead unabated it will make achievement of the targets enshrined in the climate bill extremely difficult, if not impossible.

Through this work-stream we will look at the policy framework needed to bring the abatement options forward faster. This will include exploring changes to the current regulatory and consenting regime.

Carbon trading: This work looks at all aspects of emissions trading, including the new Carbon Reduction Commitment and Phase 3 of the EU Emissions Trading Scheme. The main focus is a joint piece of work with the RSA looking at the viability and economic efficiency of introducing a scheme of personal carbon trading into the current policy landscape.

Smart meters: We are investigating the potential to roll-out smart metering beyond the 'real-time' display commitment of the Energy White Paper.

Local government and climate change: We are continuing the outreach and advocacy from our successful 2006-07 Local Government and Climate Change project. This theme is kindly sponsored by BP, E.On, RWE Npower and Shell.

International climate change

As part of our international programme we have a number of climate related work streams:

Pathways to an effective global agreement: A post 2012 climate reduction programme will only be possible if the international community can resolve a number of complex and competing strands of policy and country positions. Working in partnership with E3G our pathways project will bring together a wide range of civil society groups to consider the political, civil society and business contributions to such an agreement.

Stakeholder engagement: Run in partnership with DEFRA, this work stream will look at the elements required to form the framework upon which agreement can be reached through the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) process.

A low carbon budget for Europe: Green Alliance will publish a pamphlet outlining our vision for EU budget reform, essential if the EU is to match its climate change, climate security and energy security ambitions with meaningful change to the way it does its business and the priorities it sets for spending its money.

Our vision of a low carbon Europe: We will develop a “vision for a low carbon Europe” looking at what role Europe could, and should, be playing in 2020 on climate, both internally and externally.

This work is funded by the FCO and Defra.

For more information

Please see our website www.green-alliance.org.uk/climatechange or contact Russell Marsh on rmarsh@green-alliance.org.uk or Rebekah Phillips on rphillips@green-alliance.org.uk