

RURAL ECONOMY AND CONNECTIVITY COMMITTEE

SUBMISSION FROM THE 2050 CLIMATE GROUP

THE DRAFT CLIMATE CHANGE PLAN (RPP3)

Introduction:

The 2050 Climate Group aims to engage, educate and empower future leaders in Scotland to take action on climate change. We want to inspire young people to get involved not only in the Group, but also in the design of policy, acting as catalysts for change to ensure a sustainable future beyond the year 2050.

In providing evidence to the committees scrutinizing the draft Climate Change Plan (CCP), we do so not as technical experts in the subject matter (although we do have such expertise within our network of young leaders), but as experts in our area of work: leading a social movement to a low carbon Scotland. We also consider ourselves as representatives of the next generation of leaders in Scotland.

General comments:

Firstly, we applaud the Government's success in leading the UK in greenhouse gas emissions reductions and achieving targets early. We are proud to live and work in a country that takes action on climate change seriously and that seeks to be progressive in its approach. In particular, the Cabinet Secretary Roseanna Cunningham's comment that it is of the highest importance that the CCP is supported and owned by the people of Scotland resonates strongly with us. However, it is in this regard that we feel more could – and should – be done to engage and consider young people in the policy process. We acknowledge that the Climate Change Hub has made commendable efforts towards this, but we are concerned that similar efforts are lacking across other government departments.

We work to 'mainstream' climate change within our generation and create a 'new normal' whereby the low carbon transition is seen as everyone's remit and we would like the government as a whole to follow our lead in this.

Integration of the Plan and a strong sense of ownership for its success across government departments is an area that we recognise as also being critical for ensuring Scotland's sustainable future. Specifically, ensuring coherent and joined-up thinking between the interrelated areas of transport, infrastructure and planning, finance and economic, and innovation must go beyond the coherence provided by the TIMES model – the policy drivers and priorities of the teams and individuals responsible for them must be aligned. Hence we feel the Plan's importance should be addressed more effectively within the CPP.

While we understand that the strategic framework of Scotland's Economic Strategy and details given in Section

3.1 go some way to addressing the collaborative and coherent approach needed, we are concerned that it does not go far enough. We feel strongly that the concept and narrative of sustainability must be embedded across government departments and policy areas. This would both tie together themes such as fairness, prosperity, health and the environment, and provide a means to focus cross-government priorities in a

people-centred way. In turn, this would allow links between climate solutions, well-being and equality, and a resilient economy to be communicated clearly and coherently. We believe this is key to creating a future that we, as young people, want to see.

We believe that a clear people-centred narrative of sustainability is not only key for embedding cross-government coherence, integration and ownership of the CCP, it is also necessary for realising wider benefits, avoiding unintended consequences, and achieving the necessary behaviour changes. This is because framing climate action in such an integrated way – with benefits to people as the ultimate goal – opportunities for wider benefits are built-in and multiple reasons are provided for people to change their habits. After all, climate change is not only a ‘green’ issue, it is an equalities issue, an economic issue, a public health issue, a national security issue, and so on. It also provides a means of framing the climate targets as everyone’s responsibility – something we also believe needs to be made clearer in this Plan.

The framework already provided by the Sustainable Development Goals and the Open Government Partnership – both of which have been laudably committed to by the Scottish Government – is a potentially powerful means of achieving this mind set and narrative. However, we note with disappointment that the Sustainable Development Goals are only mentioned within the CCP in relation to waste targets, and the Open Government Partnership is not mentioned at all. This is despite their strong relevance across all sectors and importance in achieving support and ownership through greater transparency and citizen empowerment.

Written evidence to the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee:

We have serious concerns over the transport Policies and Proposals, reflecting an overarching concern we have that there needs to be greater integration of the Plan across all government departments and stronger consideration and engagement with young people, as mentioned in Part 1 of our response to this committee. As such, transport is the focus of our response to this committee.

The emphasis of solutions is heavily biased towards improvements in technology and does not seek to address the large predicted increase in road transport use. There is little to no regard for the role of active travel, public transport and integration of transport systems, the role of the planning system and ‘placemaking’, and the wider benefits that these all bring.

The heavy reliance on technological solutions removes a large amount of control that the Scottish Government can assert in order to meet targets, particularly as tax (e.g. Vehicle Excise Duty) and energy (e.g. Biofuels Policy) remain reserved matters and our exit from the EU brings uncertainty to our negotiating position for influencing emissions standards.

We note that only one policy outcome addresses active travel and is supported by only two Policies, neither of which are new nor do they represent improvements. This is particularly disappointing as we believe that our generation has a strong vision for a Scotland in which active travel could become the dominant mode of transport

within our towns and cities for shorter journeys. This also fails to recognise the huge potential for wider benefits to public health, well-being and the economy that investment in active travel can bring.

Fundamentally, we believe that if Scottish Government is to realise its stated ambition of reducing transport emissions in ways that “promote sustainable environmental and socio-economic wellbeing” then the concept of sustainability must be approached in a more integrated and holistic way. In this regard, we would like to see approaches laid out that address the need for a coherent vision for transport that supports a sustainable Scotland.

We have conducted a number of exercises where we have asked our young leaders to envision the future and every single one of these visions and exercises has imagined futures where public transport and active travel play a much larger part in overall mobility than currently. Young leaders want to be mobile but in new, modern, mixed- modal, public, affordable and active ways. We recommend that the REC and the relevant government departments spend some time finding out what it is that the next generation wants as the policies don't necessarily match up to this vision as we know it to be.

2050 Climate Group
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