



Climate lobby briefing: Monday 14th November 2016 From Climate Accord to Climate Action!

The historic Paris Climate Agreement came into force earlier this month on the 4th November 2016. While we meet for the Northern Ireland Assembly climate lobby, world leaders are gathered in Marrakech for COP22 to progress global climate commitments. The Paris Agreement commits the UK and all the other parties to the treaty to:

“holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels”. It further commits us to reducing emissions “in accordance with the best available science” and on “the basis of equity”.

The Paris Agreement text emphasises the “emissions gap” between the temperature goal and the pledges that countries have made so far. Independent analysis by [Climate Action Tracker](#) concludes that current policies put us on track for global warming of 3.6°C while current pledges, if they were all delivered on time, would only limit warming to 2.7°C.

All existing targets and timelines for emission reductions need to be re-evaluated against the “Paris test”. Indeed, all policy choices need to be evaluated against the Paris Test: is this action compatible with limiting warming to 1.5°C? Is it enough action to give us a decent chance of limiting warming to 1.5°C?

In the UK the 2008 Climate Change Act introduced a legally binding target to reduce the UK’s overall greenhouse gas emissions to at least 80% below 1990 levels by 2050, with an interim target of a 35% reduction by 2020. The UK Climate Change Act does not legally require Northern Ireland to cut emissions equitably by 80% by 2050 and 35% by 2020; it only applies to the overall UK emission rate. Whilst EU targets for 2030 are a 40% reduction compared to 1990 levels and an 80-95% reduction by 2050.

However, these targets post-Paris are no longer in accordance with the best available science, nor do they limit our total emissions to our fair share of the remaining 2°C global carbon budget, let alone the aspiration to mitigate to 1.5°C. As Lord Stern announced last month as part of a [10 year review of the Stern Report](#), “the cost of climate inaction is higher now than it was 10 years ago... we are already perilously close to overshooting the atmospheric concentration that is consistent with the goal of the Paris Agreement of holding global warming to well below 2°C, so we are likely to need negative emissions.”

When it comes to reducing our Greenhouse Gas Emissions [Northern Ireland is the lowest performing region in the UK](#). In total, the UK has reduced emissions by 36% (between the base year 1990 and 2014). England and Scotland are the highest performing regions with reduced emissions by 38% and 41%. Wales and Northern Ireland reduced emissions by only 18% and 17% respectively. While this year in Northern Ireland we did see a decrease in carbon emissions by 3% on the year prior, the long-term emission reductions trend reveals how much more work we need to do to get serious about climate action to align with the ambition in the Paris Agreement.

As the region with the worst emissions reduction rate in the UK and lagging behind the Republic of Ireland and Scotland, who have passed national Climate Laws, now is the time for action. It is in all our interests to act now to avoid the systemic risks that unchecked climate change will bring and to ensure we are not left behind in the transition to a low carbon global economy.

As high emitters amongst our industrialised peers we cannot turn a blind eye to the fact that we are fuelling this crisis. A crisis which is hitting hardest and already impacting those who have done least to cause it in the developing countries, driving hunger, lack of access to water and increasing the number of climate related humanitarian disasters. The urgency to act could not be clearer. Every year of inaction increases all our risk from climate change impacts and increases the cost of transition.



Calling on all MLAs to take urgent action on climate change

1. Strong climate targets in the Programme for Government

Support strong climate targets in the Programme for Government under 'Outcome 2: We live and work sustainably – protecting the environment' on greenhouse gas emissions:

- At a minimum we need to **reduce our greenhouse gas emissions by 35% by 2020.**

This target aligns with the UK Climate Change Act and should be the first step the Executive take to contribute equitably to UK and global greenhouse gas emission reductions. The Executive also needs to be flexible to revise climate targets and ambition to be fully aligned with the Paris Agreement and latest scientific thinking. For example, the latest guidance from the [UK Climate Change Committee](#) on the UK's 2030 emissions reduction target is recommended at a 53-80% level reduction but this only mitigates to 2°C. While we await the UK Climate Change Committee publishing revised guidance for the UK's 2030 targets, to be compatible with the global 1.5°C mitigation target, we urge the Northern Ireland Assembly to follow the [Scottish Parliament](#)'s lead in acknowledging this shift and plan for the target revisions.

2. Local Climate Change Act

Support the introduction of a local Climate Change Act. This is essential to put us on a clear, accountable, long-term pathway to equitably reduce our emissions in the years and decades ahead.

Lord Stern (world leading climate expert from the UK) [latest analysis](#) on climate action states:

“Policy-makers must act quickly, but also consistently. The consistency, clarity and credibility of policies to both tackle climate change and to advance economic development are imperative. Policy makers must set a clear, long-term direction of travel. Government-induced policy risk is the biggest deterrent to investment worldwide.”

The [UK Committee on Climate Change](#), writing on the appropriateness of a future Northern Ireland Climate Change Act, shared the positive impact legislation has had at a UK level and in Scotland:

“UK carbon budgets (an instrument under the legislation) are driving future change and policy. The budgets have meant that action towards the 2050 target progresses at the right pace. It is neither continually postponed and then done too rapidly which would lead to costly scrapping of higher carbon investments before the end of their lives, nor is too much action done too early leading to more costly solutions than those that might be available at later dates. The targets have allowed the Government to plan for the replacement of high carbon capital as opportunities arise, and to undertake the appropriate degree of research, innovation and incremental change to prepare for larger future changes.”

3. 100% clean energy within a generation

Support 100% clean energy within a generation. Much of the technology to achieve this already exists and the move to renewables is gathering pace all over the world. According to the [UK Committee on Climate Change](#), 100% clean energy system with a generation is possible but needs clear policy direction to achieve this. We want to rebuild our economy on a more sustainable footing, creating many thousands of jobs in new industries, improving our quality of life and health, and safeguarding precious natural resources. MLAs can make this a reality by:

- Phasing out carbon from our power system and investing in an energy system powered by clean resources like the wind, sun and tides.
- Making investments in warm homes, sustainable transport to reduce demand for energy and supporting families and communities in the transition.