



Draft UK Climate Change Bill

Background

The UK Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs launched a consultation on the [Draft Climate Change Bill](#) on 13 March 2007. As well as providing background information on climate change the consultation document posed a series of 20 questions about the likely contents of the Bill. The consultation closed on 12 June 2007.

The Draft UK Climate Change Bill and the Northern Ireland Assembly

The consultation document contains a short section on devolution which states:

This Bill has been drafted for consultation on a UK basis, in other words, drafted with all powers and duties appearing to rest with the Secretary of State. It has not yet been determined how the functions of the Bill would be performed, whether by the Secretary of State, the Devolved Administrations or jointly. This approach has been taken — with the agreement of each of the Devolved Administrations — to enable consultation and debate to proceed on this matter.

A draft of the Bill is appended to the consultation document, Section 43 of which states “*This Act extends to the whole of the United Kingdom*”. Given the recent change in administration in Scotland and the return of devolution to Northern Ireland it is possible that the extent and implementation of the Bill could be subject to change prior to its introduction at Westminster.

As you may know the Scottish Executive recently announced its intention to introduce a climate change Bill to the Scottish Parliament, setting a more ambitious target for carbon dioxide emission reduction than proposed in the UK Bill. Details are available at

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/2007/06/21152519>.

What does the UK Draft Climate Change Bill Propose

The key points of the draft UK Bill are:

- The setting of a legally binding UK carbon dioxide emission reduction target of 60% by 2050 plus an interim target of a 26-32% reduction by 2020.

- A new system of legally binding five year carbon budgets, which will require the Government to set binding limits on carbon dioxide emissions for five-year periods, beginning with the period 2008-12.
- A new statutory body, the *Committee on Climate Change*, to provide independent expert advice and guidance to Government on achieving its targets and staying within its carbon budgets.
- New powers to enable the Government to more easily implement policies to cut emissions.
- A new system of annual reporting to Parliament. The Committee on Climate Change will provide an independent progress report to which the Government must respond.
- A requirement for Government to report at least every five years on current and predicted impacts of climate change and on its proposals and policy for adapting to climate change.

Draft UK Climate Change Bill Timetable

The UK Government intends to introduce the Bill during autumn 2007, with a view to it completing its passage through the UK Parliament in spring 2008. These dates are obviously provisional and could be subject to change.

Alan Rehfisch
Senior Research Officer
Research and Library Service