



## Briefing: Proposal for a Norwegian Climate Change Bill

WWF Scotland supports the introduction of a Climate Change Bill in Norway, based on the positive experience of the Scottish Climate Change Act and the need for international action to reduce climate change emissions. Scottish climate emissions have reduced over 45% since 1990, the baseline year established in the Scottish Act.

### Key points

We believe that the Norwegian Government's proposal provides a good starting point, but lacks specific components that, based on our experience of the operation of Scotland's Climate Change Act, would have a real and tangible impact on policymaking to deliver the required emissions reductions. We recommend:

- The setting of **legislated climate targets** - the climate change act should set legally binding long-term targets in line with the requirements of the **Paris climate agreement**.
- As well as long-term targets, the climate change act should **require the Government to set carbon budgets**, a cap on the amount of greenhouse gases emitted in Norway over a four-year period, as well as **an accompanying plan of policy actions** to be implemented that will allow these budgets to be met.
- The act should require **an annual debate in Parliament reflecting on Norway's progress against climate targets**, to ensure the Government is held to account for its efforts to reduce emissions.
- We believe that **an independent body should give a regular audit** of whether the government's policies are in line with the targets defined in Norway's climate change act. Scottish and UK experience has demonstrated the success of such an approach.
- There should be **consequences on Government** for the failure to hit climate change targets.

We think the successes so far and challenges ahead for Norway are different and complementary to Scotland's. Therefore there is much that each nation could learn and share from the other. We think discussion between the governments of each nation would be highly beneficial, and if there is anything we can do to support and facilitate that, we would be very happy to help.

### Detailed response

We believe that the Norwegian Government's proposal provides a good starting point, but lacks specific components that would have a real and tangible impact on policymaking to deliver the required emissions reductions. Elements that would strengthen the proposals include:

## Legally binding targets

We welcome the aspiration that Norway should be a low emission society by 2050, but note the lack of definition over actual intended greenhouse gas emission reduction targets. The experience in Scotland shows that legally binding targets, which are insulated from political change in electoral cycles, provide a predictable planning framework for decision makers and a clear signal to businesses about political commitment to the low carbon transition, helping to trigger investment in the green economy and drive down costs. The unanimous cross-party support for the Scottish Act has given real certainty to the public and business about the future direction of travel. Concrete targets for domestic emissions reduction must be set, in accordance with the Paris Climate Change agreement, whose goal is to limit global temperature rise above 1,5 C.

## Carbon budgets & plans

The climate change act should require the Government to set carbon budgets, a cap on the amount of greenhouse gases emitted in Norway over a four-year period, as well as an accompanying plan of policy actions to be implemented that will allow these budgets to be met. The Scottish Act requires a climate action plan (known as the Report on Policies and Proposals or RPP) to be drawn up in five-year intervals following the setting of a new batch of annual climate targets. The report must set out the policies to meet carbon budgets across every sector. This ensures that the sum of individual measures adds up to overall climate budgets, provides a clear roadmap for each sector, and provides a benchmark for monitoring progress. Since the introduction of the Act, sectoral policy plans consistently refer back to the Climate Act targets. Climate emission reduction targets are benchmarked in the Heat Generation Policy Statement, the Electricity Generation Policy Statement, and transport roadmaps. In Scotland, the climate action plan is a very valuable guide to future climate action. It sets out exactly how policies and proposals are expected to reduce emissions, broken down by sector and individual policies (attributing abatement to each one). It shows where effort needs to be focussed and makes it easier to identify where emissions are going off track and put in place compensatory measures where required.

## Annual review

We support WWF Norway's proposal for an annual debate in Parliament reflecting on Norway's progress against climate targets, to ensure the Government is held to account for its efforts to reduce emissions. This would ideally follow publication of an annual review. In Scotland, the formal annual reporting cycle is important in ensuring transparent and effective Parliamentary scrutiny. Regular reporting helps to focus minds, drive policy development, ensure that climate change is on Parliamentary Committee agendas, and ensures that the annual financial budget is scrutinised by relevant Committees against climate objectives.

Scotland's progress is reviewed each year by the UK Committee on Climate Change, which provides the Scottish Parliament with an annual progress report, highlighting successes and identifying sectors and policies that need additional effort to ensure that carbon budgets are not exceeded.

We also believe that the contribution of the Government's annual budget to meeting climate targets should be reviewed, to ensure that key spending and infrastructure decisions are aligned with delivering a low carbon society. In Scotland, the climate action plan, the RPP, provides a benchmark to test the Scottish Government's annual financial budget against, to ensure it is climate-proofed.

## Control mechanism

We believe that an independent body should give a regular audit of whether the Government's policies are in line with the targets defined in Norway's climate change act. Based on the Scottish and UK experiences, we recommend the establishment of an independent expert advisory council to provide advice on long-term targets, carbon budgets and on individual policies, as well as to

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independently monitor progress. The UK Committee on Climate Change has a duty to provide this function under both the UK and Scottish Climate Change Acts.

The integration of expert advice helps to ensure that carbon budgets and policies are consistent with the latest developments in climate science, economics, technological solutions and behavioural psychology. A broad spread of disciplines on the committee is important to ensure progress across all sectors.

The independence of the expert council is critical, because it is able to frame the discussion on budgets and policies in terms of the country's overall best interests, rather than individual sectoral interests, setting out the economically and socially optimal pathways for each sector to reduce emissions. This can help to ease difficult political debates and promote a coordinated approach to policy development. However, the final decision about policies and carbon budgets rightly still rests with government.

As detailed in the previous question, the UK Committee on Climate Change has a duty to provide and publish an annual progress report to the Scottish Parliament. The independence of this report enhances accountability and transparency under the Act and provides a basis for effective Parliamentary scrutiny of the Scottish Government's efforts on climate change.

### **Consequences**

Under the current proposal there are no consequences on the Norwegian Government for not fulfilling the obligations in the climate change act. Sanctions can be an effective means to compel action; for example in Scotland, if annual climate targets are not met, a report must be published and laid before Parliament setting out new policies that will be introduced to make up any shortfall or distance to target. For instance, in 2015 a package of new policies was introduced to help put progress back on track.

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