

Climate change

Introduction

The Earth's climate has demonstrably changed on both global and regional scales since the pre-industrial era, and evidence indicates that most of the warming in the last 50 years is attributable to human activitiesⁱ. Combustion of fossil fuels for industrial or domestic usage is the principal human cause of climate changeⁱⁱ.

The UK Government's Chief Scientific Advisor has described climate change as the most severe problem that society is facing todayⁱⁱⁱ and opinion polling suggests more than 60 per cent of people support 'every possible action' to limit climate change^{iv}. Wales will be subject to increasing impacts, both direct and indirect, as a result of climate change. Predicted effects of climate change in Wales include^v:

- ◆ Increase in temperature, with summer water shortages
- ◆ Increase in winter rainfall and more frequent intense rainfall
- ◆ Reduction in snowfall and increased growing season
- ◆ An increase in river and coastal flooding
- ◆ Further habitat and species loss
- ◆ Changes to the landscape

Overview of current statutory powers of the Assembly

"Environment" is field 6 of Schedule 5 of the *Government of Wales Act 2006*. This means that the National Assembly for Wales can seek Measure-making powers over environmental matters through Legislative Competence Orders. However, the biggest drivers of climate change, such as transport and large-scale energy generation, are mostly influenced by fiscal measures and UK legislation, which are reserved to the UK government.

The Explanatory Memorandum to the Draft Climate Change Bill states that the devolved administrations will need to develop their positions on the Bill, and the intent is not to compromise their positions, while being in a position to legislate quickly. The Bill will be amended to take account of the views of the devolved administrations before it is introduced to the UK Parliament in autumn 2007.

Forthcoming EU and UK primary legislation

- ◆ A Draft Climate Change Bill was published on 13 March 2007.
- ◆ A White Paper on Energy is expected to be published by May 2007.
- ◆ The Waste Framework Directive is currently being revised.

EU policy

The EU has wide jurisdiction over environmental matters. It is increasingly using this jurisdiction to influence the drivers of climate change.

- ◆ The European Commission is developing a legal framework, by the end of 2007, to cover carbon capture and geological storage.
- ◆ On 7 February 2007, the European Commission adopted a Communication outlining a new strategy to reduce CO₂ emissions from new cars and vans.
- ◆ The European Climate Change Programme aims to identify and develop all the necessary elements of an EU strategy to implement the Kyoto Protocol. The Second European Climate Change Programme was launched in October 2005.

- ◆ On 14 February 2007, the European Parliament adopted a resolution calling for clear and binding measures to tackle climate change, including a 30 per cent reduction in greenhouse gases by 2030, and a 25 per cent share of renewable energy in the EU's energy mix.
- ◆ On 20 December 2006, the European Commission adopted a proposal for legislation to include aviation in the EU Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS). The ETS is the largest multi-country, multi-sector greenhouse gas emission trading scheme worldwide.
- ◆ The European Council of 8-9 March 2007 called for a binding target of a 20 per cent share of renewable energies in overall EU energy consumption by 2020^{vi}. From the overall renewables target, differentiated national overall targets will be derived.

Key Assembly Government strategy documents and action plans from the Second Assembly:

- ◆ The Environment Strategy for Wales^{vii} and its accompanying Action Plan^{viii} are the principal means through which climate change will be tackled.
- ◆ A consultation closed on 27 April about a climate change adaptation action plan for Wales^{ix}.
- ◆ A consultation document, "Planning for Climate Change", finished its consultation period on 30 March 2007^x.

Legacy issues from the Second Assembly

The Environment, Planning and Countryside Committee's legacy paper highlighted the Climate Change Bill and the Environment Strategy for Wales as issues for the attention of the Third Assembly.

Useful links

1. The BBC has a site dedicated to climate change:
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/climate/>
2. The Welsh Assembly Government has a website covering climate change:
http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/environmentcountryside/climate_change/?lang=en
3. DEFRA has a climate change page on its website:
<http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/climatechange/index.htm>
4. The climate change webpage of the European Commission's Directorate-General of the Environment can be found at:
http://ec.europa.eu/environment/climat/home_en.htm

Further information

Research papers are available on waste management, climate change, renewable energy, and the Environment Strategy for Wales at <http://assembly/presidingoffice/mrs/briefings/environment-planning-e.htm>

For further information on any aspect of the environment, please contact:

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ⁱ Dr RK Pachauri, Chairman of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 7 December 2005, <http://www.ipcc.ch/press/sp-07122005.htm>

ⁱⁱ Hadley Centre for Climate Prediction and Research, *Climate Change and the Greenhouse Effect: A Briefing from the Hadley Centre*, http://www.met-office.gov.uk/research/hadleycentre/pubs/brochures/2005/climate_greenhouse.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ Professor Sir David King, Chief Scientific Adviser to HM Government, 2004. Climate Change Science: Adapt, Mitigate, or Ignore? *Science*, 9 January 2004, **303** (5655), pp. 176-177.

^{iv} Lorenzoni I and Pidgeon N, 2006. Public Views on Climate Change: European and USA Perspectives, *Climate Change* 77 (1-2), pp 73-95.

^v Welsh Assembly Government, May 2006, *Environment Strategy for Wales*, pp. 21-22,

http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/environmentcountryside/epq/Environment_strategy_for_wales/About_the_strategy/?lang=en

^{vi} European Council, *Conclusions of the Presidency*, 8-9 March 2007,

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=DOC/07/1&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

^{vii} Welsh Assembly Government, May 2006, *Environment Strategy for Wales*,

http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/environmentcountryside/epq/Environment_strategy_for_wales/About_the_strategy/?lang=en

^{viii} Welsh Assembly Government, *Environment Strategy for Wales: First Action Plan*,

http://new.wales.gov.uk/docrepos/40382/4038231121/118554/Env_strat_rewrite/Action_Plan_e.pdf?lang=en

^{ix} Welsh Assembly Government, February 2007, *Responding to our Changing Climate: Consultation on a Climate Change Adaptation Action Plan for Wales*,

<http://new.wales.gov.uk/consultation/662235/1502-270407/climatechange?lang=en>

^x Welsh Assembly Government, December 2006, *Planning for Climate Change: Consultation Document*,

http://new.wales.gov.uk/docrepos/40382/4038231121/403821/403821/403827/40382/1095043/Planning_for_Climate_Change1.pdf?lang=en