

Just Forests Submission on Climate Bill-January 2011

The Bill has to mandate the Government to set five year targets. 10-year targets are just too far apart. A Government can come and go without facing any target.

The five year targets should be expressed as a simple Carbon Budget just like our Kyoto commitment is expressed as a limit on emissions of 314 Mt CO₂e for the five years 2008-2012.

I welcome the fact that the Bill covers all Irish greenhouse gas emissions and focuses on domestic action to reduce pollution rather than on spending taxpayers money to buy offset permits overseas.

The Expert Advisory Body must be allowed to publish its own reports, publication should not be "subject to the consent of the Government".

The five-year Carbon Budgets and the targets in the Bill should be legally binding, like they are under the UK climate Act.

The National Climate Change Plan should likewise be for five years, not seven, corresponding to each five-year Budget. It should set out the measures the Government is adopting to keep emissions within the Carbon Budget for that period.

The Bill should require ministers to perform their functions in a way that "is consistent with" the national plan, not simply to "have regard to" it. The stronger language replaced "have regard to" in the planning area in the 2009 Planning Act.

The targets in the Bill are not as strong as they should be. Once the EU moves to a 30% reduction target for 2020 the target in the Bill will be less than Ireland's EU obligation. And to be in line with the science the EU target should be closer to 40%.

The Expert Advisory Body is too small. There needs to be at least 5 members apart from the Chair and representatives of the EPA, the SEAI and Teagasc.

For the past 21 years I have worked to create awareness of the importance of attitudinal change to matters of Climate Change, Natural Resources and Poverty. Recently-passed EU Legislation

on illegal logging (October 2010) is most welcome and a step in the right direction. The NEW Legislation places an obligation (legal) on timber importers to ensure they are trading in legally-harvested timber and wood-based products.

I also welcome this Climate Bill and I want to see it passed. But it should be strengthened to ensure its effectiveness as a cornerstone of a sustainable, low-carbon recovery. Vested interests are doing all in their power to weaken the Bill. Do NOT let that happen. Society is at a crossroad and how we behave from here on will determine what quality of life we can expect to have.

In the coming weeks the global population will reach 7BILLION. Within 25 years the population will explode to 9.3BILLION. Where on Earth will we get our fresh water, wood and all the natural resources needed for economic development?

This is the United Nations-designated International Year of Forests-2011(IYF-2011). It is the UN's wish that all governments worldwide are proactively doing something to offset the worst effects of Climate Change. Passing this Bill will be a step in the right direction for Ireland.

Here in Just Forests we also believe that thousands of jobs can be created by developing new technologies that use less natural resources. Business-as-usual by those opposed to the Bill will not work and will only bring more hardship and uncertainty to all of us while we watch natural resources rapidly declining globally.

We as a people also have a moral obligation to developing economies to STOP the practices that are imposing such hardships on people who have had little or nothing to do with the present global temperature increases.

This BILL must be seen as working for the good of all people and not open to watering down by profit-driven vested interests. It is in all our interests that this Bill is passed without delay.

I trust my views will be taken into account and I look forward to hearing the outcomes of the consultation.

Tom Roche <tomroche@justforests.org>
Rathcobican
Rhode
Co. Offaly
Ireland

