

Climate Change Bill – A Campaign Victory **Tearfund analysis**

Summary

Tearfund is delighted that MPs have voted for a world class Climate Change Bill that meets all three of the campaign demands that we have made as part of the Stop Climate Chaos coalition over the past two years. Tearfund acknowledges the massive effort made by campaigners to achieve this, as has the UK government.

Ed Miliband said at the third reading of the Bill:

*'I end by paying tribute not to those in the House, but to those outside it: those who saw the dangers of climate change and the actions that needed to be taken long before the politicians did. I pay tribute to the scientists who detected the problem, the campaigners who fought to bring it to public attention, the green movement that mobilised for change, and above all, **the members of the public who wrote to us in record numbers, asking for a Bill that met the scale of the challenge.** I believe that we have met that challenge. We owe them a debt of gratitude for making it happen, and I urge all Members to support the Third Reading.'*

The Bill sets out a framework for the UK to make emissions cuts and now includes the following:

- 80% emissions cuts by 2050, rather than 60% cuts as originally proposed
- the UK's share of emissions from international aviation and shipping
- Five year carbon budgets with annual milestones to make sure the government is held accountable for making cuts on an annual basis

The Bill also formally establishes a Climate Change Committee (which has already been operating as a 'shadow' Committee over recent months) to advise on setting carbon budgets and other key technical issues.

Tearfund is concerned however that no limit was imposed on how much of targets can be achieved by buying in overseas credits rather than making concrete emissions cuts in the UK. We hope that this issue may be raised again in the House of Lords where the Bill goes next before receiving its final assent.

In depth

2050 target

What we started with:

A target of at least 60% cuts on 1990 levels in CO₂ by 2050 – this target was not reflective of the latest science, and would mean that the UK was not making the effort required to play its part in keeping global temperature rise below two degrees.

What we asked for:

A target of at least 80% cuts on 1990 levels in all the main greenhouse gases by 2050 – this target reflects the science, and is more commensurate with ensuring global temperature rise is kept below two degrees (if replicated in other developed countries).

What we got:

A target of at least 80% cuts on 1990 levels in all the main greenhouse gases by 2050.

Analysis:

This was a complete victory for campaigners. The government showed initial reluctance to change the target, arguing that there was consensus around 60%, and it has taken two years of campaigning to finally achieve a science based 2050 target. Work both inside and outside the House of Commons convinced the government to seek early advice on the target from the (shadow) Climate Change Committee before the Bill became law, rather than afterwards as initially suggested. Once the Committee agreed that 80% was the only scientifically defensible target, the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change announced that the government would follow this advice, and the Commons voted in favour of this issue on 28 October.

The government has now committed the UK to a target that should mean (as long as cuts are made at home) that the UK plays its part in keeping global temperature rise under the 2°C danger threshold.

International Aviation & Shipping

What we started with:

No provision for the UK's share of emissions from international aviation and shipping to be included in emissions targets or budgets.

What we asked for:

The UK's share of international aviation and shipping to be included in budgets and targets. We pushed particularly hard for aviation emissions to be included as measuring our share (via refuelling in the UK) is straightforward and is already reported under the Kyoto Protocol. We were willing to take a softer line on shipping, with a view to it being included later.

As the debate progressed numerous compromise options arose, that while not exactly reflecting our initial demands, provided a reasonable solution to this issue.

What we got:

The Government must now include international aviation and shipping emissions in the Bill by 31 December 2012 or the Secretary of State must explain to Parliament why it has not done so.

The Committee on Climate Change has a new duty to advise the government on the consequences of including emissions from international aviation and shipping in the Bill's targets and budgets.

There is a new requirement that projected emissions from international aviation and shipping must be taken into account in making decisions on carbon budgets.

Analysis:

While this is weaker than what we were originally seeking to achieve, it still ensures that emissions from these highly polluting industries are considered when setting targets and budgets and means that hopefully they will be fully incorporated by the time the second carbon budget is set in 2012. This issue was very hard fought, with the threat of a significant rebellion among labour backbenchers if a compromise was not agreed. This, together with the advice from the Climate Change Committee that these sectors should be included, forced the government to bring forward sensible amendments which were voted on by MPs on 28 October. Again, pressure from campaigners made a huge difference in bringing this critical area to the attention of decision makers.

Annual Milestones

What we started with:

The first draft of the Bill established a system of five year budgets for the UK's carbon emissions (meaning that in the same way that we budget with a limited amount of money, we would do the same with carbon).

What we wanted:

Before the Bill was drafted we asked for annual carbon budgets, but once a draft text with five year budgets was created we demanded annual targets or milestones within the five year budgets. This had the aim of increasing accountability, particularly where a budget spans two successive governments. We wanted to avoid a situation where a government could drag its feet in making cuts and then pass the buck to a new administration.

What we got:

Earlier this year, in response to pressure, the Government agreed to set indicative annual target ranges for emissions reductions (what we've been calling annual milestones).

Analysis:

Another victory for campaigners - annual milestones have been introduced meaning that there will be strong annual accountability on making cuts.

Making cuts in the UK

What we started with:

Originally there was no restriction on using carbon credits bought in from overseas instead of making actual cuts in emissions in the UK. This meant there was a danger of continuing business as usual and buying in credits rather than moving to a low carbon economy with the urgency that is needed.

What we wanted:

The House of Lords introduced a limit on the number of overseas credits that could be used – saying 70% of the effort needed to be made in the UK. While Tearfund and other agencies actually felt this proportion should be higher, we were willing to support this 70/30 split as a compromise.

What we got:

The 70/30 split was removed by the government. There is a new duty in that the Secretary of State must have regard to the need for UK domestic action on climate change when looking at how to meet the 2050 target and all carbon budgets. However, this is fairly weak and not measurable. This matter is not entirely closed in that it may be reopened when the Bill returns to the Lords for a final time before receiving its Royal Assent.

Analysis:

Tearfund is concerned that the government has not taken a more robust approach to the issue of domestic effort. The UK must take urgent action to 'de-carbonise' its own economy, and make emissions cuts at home. Currently the government is taking decisions around the power and transport sectors that could lock in high energy infrastructure for decades to come, on the promise that these could be offset elsewhere in the world. The science suggests that cuts of at least 80% are required by developed countries domestically by 2050, at the same time as developing countries are helped to radically reduce their emissions.

It remains to be seen whether the House of Lords will reopen the debate on this issue. This is an area that will require further campaigning in the future as carbon budgets are planned and decisions over energy and transport are taken.