Environment

Consultation on the draft Scottish Climate Change Adaptation Programme: Analysis of responses

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In June 2013, the Scottish Government launched a public consultation on its draft of the first Scottish Climate Change Adaptation Programme (the Programme) as required by section 53 of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009. The Programme was developed in partnership with stakeholders and aims to address the risks of climate change for Scotland which were identified in the UK Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA), published in January 2012.

The Programme is structured around an overarching aim "to increase the resilience of Scotland's people, environment and economy to the impacts of a changing climate". It includes three themes: Climate Ready Natural Environment (the N theme); Climate Ready Built Environment and Infrastructure Networks (the B theme); and Climate Ready Society (the S theme). Each theme comprises three objectives and a list of policies and proposals for meeting those objectives.

Sixty-seven (67) respondents (64 organisations and 3 individuals) took part in the consultation.

Main Findings

- There was broad support for the Programme's overarching framework, and its objectives, policies and proposals. In general, respondents thought that the Programme and its objectives, policies and proposals addressed the impacts to Scotland identified in the UK CCRA.

- Respondents acknowledged the efforts of the Scottish Government in creating a "comprehensive", "balanced" and "flexible" framework to focus the work of adaptation in Scotland. However, at the same time, it was common for respondents to request more detail about certain aspects of the Programme, to highlight areas for improvement and to suggest that there should be a greater emphasis on "taking action".

- Respondents suggested that the N theme could be strengthened by focusing more on positive measures such as restoring and sustaining ecosystems and local habitat networks, and not just on understanding the risks or avoiding the impacts of climate change.

- In relation to the B theme, respondents thought that the definition of "infrastructure" should be broadened to include green infrastructure. They also emphasised the importance of avoiding unintended consequences from actions taken to address the B objectives.

- Regarding the S theme, respondents viewed the planned "climate justice" work as especially valuable, but they perceived significant gaps in relation to the adaptation of businesses and the economy and of food security. They also wanted to see a greater emphasis on building capacity in communities.

- In terms of the support required by public bodies to help deliver the Programme, respondents highlighted a need for guidance, tools and training; senior-level leadership in national and local government; financial models to support investment in adaptation activities; and strengthened planning policy. Partnership working was seen to be key to the success of the Programme.

The Scottish Government
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Background

Section 56 of the Climate Change Act 2008 requires the UK Government to publish a Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA) every five years. Following these assessments, the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 requires Scottish Ministers to lay before the Scottish Parliament a programme for adaptation to climate change setting out Scottish Ministers' objectives, and their policies and proposals to meet those objectives.

Following publication of the first UK CCRA in January 2012, a draft Scottish Climate Change Adaptation Programme (the Programme) was developed in partnership with stakeholders, using the CCRA as a basis. The first Programme is part of an iterative process and subsequent Programmes are required to address the risks identified for Scotland in successive CCRAs.

The Programme is structured around an overarching aim to increase the resilience of Scotland's people, environment and economy to the impacts of a changing climate. It comprises three themes – (i) Climate Ready Natural Environment (the N theme); (ii) Climate Ready Buildings and Infrastructure Networks (the B theme); and (iii) Climate Ready Society (the S theme). Each theme has an outcome that the Programme is seeking to deliver in the long term (up to 2050). Within each theme there are three objectives, each with policies and proposals that provide a focus for the lifetime of the Programme in order to progress towards the long term objective. Altogether there are 124 policies and proposals in the Programme.

The consultation

Between June and September 2013, the Scottish Government undertook a public consultation to invite views on the Programme and the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) which accompanied it.

The consultation questionnaire included both closed and open questions. In the closed questions, respondents were asked to tick a box to indicate their level of support for particular aspects of the Programme. In the open questions, respondents were invited to provide further comments.

The consultation received 67 responses. All but three of these were from organisational respondents. Just over half of the organisational respondents were public bodies with defined duties under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009.[1]

Views on the overarching framework

The majority of respondents thought that the overarching framework for the Programme set an appropriate long term direction for climate change adaptation in Scotland, and that it addressed the impacts to Scotland identified in the UK CCRA.[2]

Those who thought the Programme was generally appropriate described it as "comprehensive", "balanced" and "flexible enough to cover a wide range of eventualities". The thematic approach set out in the Programme was seen to be preferable to the sectoral approach previously used, and the "shift from being responsive to being anticipatory and pre-emptive" was also welcomed.

Those who thought the framework was less well equipped to meet the Programme's objectives commented that the Programme appeared in some cases to be more "reactive than proactive". This group wanted the Programme to communicate a greater sense of urgency.

Respondents made a range of suggestions about how the overarching framework could be improved. In particular, respondents thought that the risks of climate change to the Scottish economy were not sufficiently addressed, and that information should be included which explained how the private sector would be influenced to act in relation to adaptation.

Respondents pointed out that the UK CCRA does not cover all climate change risks for Scotland, and it was suggested that the Programme would be limited if it only focused on the risks and threats set out in the UK CCRA.

Climate Ready Natural Environment – the N theme

The three objectives in the N theme were:

- N1 – Understand the effects resulting from climate change and their impacts on the natural environment

- N2 – Support a healthy and diverse natural

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[1] Section 44 of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 requires that a public body must, in exercising its functions, act in the way best calculated to deliver any statutory adaptation programme; and in a way that it considers most sustainable.

[2] Here and elsewhere in this document, 'the majority of respondents' refers to the majority of those who responded to the closed question.

environment with the capacity to adapt

- N3 – Sustain and enhance the benefits, goods and services that the natural environment provides

A majority of respondents thought the three N objectives and the policies and proposals listed under them set an appropriate long term direction for natural environment adaptation – describing them as "suitable", "sensible" and "logical".

At the same time, respondents wanted to see a greater emphasis in the N objectives on taking action. They also highlighted the need for a holistic approach to adaptation of the natural environment. Respondents thought the natural environment can play a crucial role in helping Scotland's infrastructure and society to adapt to climate change impacts. Therefore, if action is taken to help the natural environment adapt, this will add value to other adaptation efforts.

The policies and proposals under the N objectives were generally described as "appropriate" and "comprehensive". Respondents thought the N theme could be strengthened by focusing more on positive measures such as restoring and sustaining ecosystems and local habitat networks, and not just on understanding the risks or avoiding the impacts of climate change.

Climate Ready Buildings and Infrastructure Networks – the B theme

The three objectives in the B theme were:

- B1 – Understand the effects of climate change and their impacts on buildings and infrastructure networks

- B2 – Provide the knowledge, skills and tools to manage climate change impacts on buildings and infrastructure

- B3 – Increase the resilience of buildings and infrastructure networks to sustain and enhance the benefits and services provided

A majority of respondents thought the three B objectives and their policies and proposals set an appropriate long term direction for adaptation of Scotland's buildings and infrastructure networks. The B theme was described as "the most coherent of the three themes" in the Programme, and was seen to provide "a strong foundation" for improving the resilience of Scotland's infrastructure.

Those who were less satisfied with the B objectives thought they were "too narrowly defined" and wanted to see more specific objectives, incorporating a wider range of measures, with both short and long term actions. Respondents perceived gaps in the B theme in relation to: information and communications technology infrastructure; energy infrastructure; coastal and inland water infrastructure; and water supplies.

Respondents thought that the definition of "infrastructure" in the B theme should be broadened to include green infrastructure. They also emphasised the importance of avoiding unintended consequences from actions taken to address the B objectives – for example, action taken to improve the resilience of the road infrastructure could result in greater carbon emissions.

Climate Ready Society – the S theme

The three objectives in the S theme were:

- S1 – Understand the effects of climate change and their impacts on people, homes and communities

- S2 – Increase the awareness of the impacts of climate change to enable people to adapt to future extreme weather events

- S3 – Support our health service and emergency responders to enable them to respond effectively to the increased pressures associated with a changing climate

A majority of respondents thought the three S objectives and their policies and proposals set an appropriate long term direction for adaptation of Scottish society – describing them as "comprehensive" and addressing "a good range of important issues". Respondents considered the "climate justice" work identified under objective S1 to be especially welcome and valuable.

Those who were less satisfied commented that the S theme was "the least developed" of the Programme's three themes. This group perceived gaps in relation to the adaptation of businesses and the economy and of food security. They also wanted to see a greater emphasis on building capacity in communities.

Role of others in delivering the Programme

In terms of the support required by public bodies with duties to help deliver the Programme, respondents highlighted a need for guidance, tools and training; leadership at a senior level in national and local government; financial models to support investment in adaptation activities; and strengthened planning policy. Support was voiced for organisations like Adaptation Scotland and the Sustainable Scotland Network which play an important role in capacity building, sharing knowledge and producing guidance for public bodies.

Respondents were divided in their views about whether the Programme set out adequate arrangements for public engagement and for involving a range of other stakeholders in delivery. Respondents wanted to see the Programme include a "clear statement of ambition" to engage more inclusively with all relevant stakeholders, including businesses, communities, the media and the general public. There was also a request for clarification about who would be responsible for the delivery of engagement activities, and the timescales and resources available for this engagement work.

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

In relation to the SEA, a majority of respondents thought the SEA set out an accurate description of the current environmental baseline; and they agreed with the predicted environmental effects, the recommendations and the proposals for monitoring the environmental effects of the Programme. They were also not aware of additional environmental information that would help inform the environmental assessment findings, nor were they aware of other 'reasonable' alternatives to the adaptation programme and its content that should be considered as part of the SEA process.

Other key issues from the consultation

Across all consultation questions, respondents repeatedly raised a number of key issues as areas for improvement in the Programme. In particular, there were requests for clarification about how the Programme would be delivered, who was responsible/ accountable for delivery, priorities and timescales, funding, and arrangements for reporting and monitoring.

Conclusion

In general, respondents supported the Scottish Government's draft Scottish Climate Change Adaptation Programme and voiced their willingness to play a part in helping Scotland to become more resilient to the processes of climate change. Some respondents made positive comments about the Programme overall, describing it as "comprehensive" and "welcome", and recognising the effort taken by the Scottish Government in developing a strategic approach to adaptation. At the same time, they wanted to see the Programme communicate a greater sense of urgency and put a greater emphasis on action.

Respondents emphasised the importance of adaptation becoming embedded in the policy, processes and language of the planning system. They also thought that partnership working is key to the success of the Programme.

This document, along with full research report of the project, and further information about social and policy research commissioned and published on behalf of the Scottish Government, can be viewed on the Internet at: http://www.scotland.gov.uk/socialresearch. If you have any further queries about social research, please contact us at socialresearch@scotland.gsi.gov.uk or on 0131-244 2111.

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