



Climate Change

Introduction

Compelling scientific evidence pinpoints the activities of humankind – particularly the combustion of fossil fuelsⁱ – as being largely responsible for warming in the atmosphere since the pre-industrial ageⁱⁱ.

The former Chief Scientific Advisor to the UK Government described climate change as 'the biggest problem facing us globally this century. There is no bigger problem. The threat is quite simple; it's a threat to our civilisation'ⁱⁱⁱ. 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

Current and proposed legislative competence of the Assembly

Under the *Government of Wales Act 2006*, the National Assembly for Wales can seek legislative competence through Acts of Parliament or Legislative Competence Orders (LCOs) to make a piece of law in the form of an 'Assembly Measure'. Measures can only be made in a specific policy area (or 'Matter') added to one of the 20 'Fields' (or broad subject areas) which are contained in Schedule 5 to the Act.

As "Environment" is Field 6 of Schedule 5 to the Act, the National Assembly for Wales can seek Measure-making powers in this area. 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.

Forthcoming EU and UK primary legislation

- The Waste Framework Directive is currently being revised.
- The Climate Change Bill was published on 14 November 2007.
- A White Paper on Energy was published in May 2007.

EU Policy

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

- An EU target for 20 per cent reduction in carbon emissions by 2020, and for 20 per cent of energy generation from renewable sources by 2020, was proposed on 23 January 2008.
- The European Commission is developing a legal framework to cover carbon capture and geological storage, to be published in 2008.
- On 7 February 2007, the European Commission adopted a Communication outlining a new strategy to reduce CO₂ emissions from new cars and vans.
- On 10 January 2007, the European Commission published a Communication on a climate change strategy for Europe, with the aim of limiting climate change to 2°C above pre-industrial levels.
- Also on 10 January 2007, the European Commission published a strategic review of the European energy situation, including a complete set of European Energy Policy measures.

- 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 20 December 2006, the European Commission adopted a proposal for legislation to include aviation in the EU Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS). The Environment Ministers reached unanimous political agreement with the Commission's proposal on 20 December 2007.

Key Welsh Government strategy documents and action plans:

- The Renewable energy Route Map for Wales consultation document was published in February 2008^{vi}.
- The One Wales agreement commits the Welsh Assembly Government to cut carbon emissions by 3 per cent year-on-year by 2011 in areas of devolved competence^{vii}. The Climate Change Commission for Wales provides advice to the Welsh Assembly Government on climate change.
- A consultation document, "Planning for Climate Change", finished its consultation period on 30 March 2007^x.
- The Environment Strategy for Wales^{vii} and its accompanying Action Plan^{viii} are the principal means through which climate change will be tackled.

Useful links

- The Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research has plentiful research on climate change: <http://www.tyndall.ac.uk/>
- The Hadley Centre for Climate Prediction and Research has information about the changing climate: <http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/research/hadleycentre/>
- The Welsh Assembly Government has a website covering climate change: http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/environmentcountryside/climate_change/?lang=en
- DEFRA has a climate change and energy page on its website: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/climatechange/index.htm>
- 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
- The BBC has a site dedicated to climate change: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/climate/>

Further information

Research papers are available on waste management in Wales, carbon dioxide emissions in Wales, the Climate Change Bill, the White Paper on Energy, fortnightly collections of residual domestic waste, the Environmental Protection and Waste Management Legislative Competence Order, renewable energy, and the Environment Strategy for Wales at <http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-assembly-publications-economic.htm>

For further information on any aspect of the environment, please contact Gareth Clubb, Members' Research Service (Gareth.Clubb@wales.gsi.gov.uk), 029 2089 8638

ⁱ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, [A report of working group I of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change: Summary for policymakers](#), August 2007

ⁱⁱ *ibid*

ⁱⁱⁱ The Climate Group, [Viewpoint: Professor Sir David King](#), 28 June 2004

^{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, [Environment Strategy for Wales](#), May 2006, pp. 21-22

^{vi} European Council, [Conclusions of the Presidency](#), 8-9 March 2007

^{vii} Welsh Assembly Government, [Environment Strategy for Wales](#), May 2006

^{viii} Welsh Assembly Government, [Environment Strategy for Wales: First Action Plan](#), May 2006

^{ix} Welsh Assembly Government, February 2007, [Responding to our changing climate: Consultation on a climate change adaptation action plan for Wales](#), July 2006

^x Welsh Assembly Government, December 2006, [Planning for Climate Change: Consultation Document](#), December 2006

^{vi} Welsh Assembly Government, [Renewable energy route map for Wales: Consultation on way forward to a leaner, greener and cleaner Wales](#), February 2008

^{vii} Welsh Assembly Government, [One Wales: A progressive agenda for the government of Wales](#), June 2007