

The Local Government and Communities Committee

Review of RPP3 (Climate Change Plan), Wednesday 1st February 2017

Thank you for the opportunity to submit some initial thoughts concerning the recently published draft Climate Change Plan on behalf of Sustaining Dunbar.

Sustaining Dunbar is a Community Development Trust that is also a part of the global 'Transition Network' of communities. We believe that how we navigate and manage our transition away from fossil fuel dependence is the greatest challenge of our time.

The challenge that we are facing is one of complex systems change. As our ecological support systems become increasingly stressed and degraded so our social, economic and political systems are becoming less and less fit for purpose, pushed further from equilibrium and liable to sudden, unexpected and unpredictable change.

We need to become skilled at dealing creatively with change and finding the leverage points where we can intervene most effectively to create the sort of future we want.

For most human beings, the most meaningful level of scale at which to understand and engage with systemic change is at the level of community. At this level it becomes much more possible to build the strong, trusting collaborative relationships and the sense of common purpose, agency and connection which enable and support us to identify what needs to change locally and take action together to make that happen.

Successful climate action cannot be delivered purely by top-down direction. Instead, we need to create conditions which support and empower people, groups and institutions to find new ways to collaborate, to design and bring into being new experimental technologies, processes and structures and to then share their learning with others. Our communities need to become resilient enough, not just so as to be able to cope with inevitable forthcoming crises and bounce back to 'normal' but to actively engage with creating and shaping the new, locally adapted, low-carbon 'normal' that is waiting to emerge.

Sustaining Dunbar's 'Local Resilience Action Plan'¹ produced in 2011, following a two-year community engagement project, was an early attempt to paint a shared vision of the sort of low-carbon future we could create -and the opportunities this could bring to build a better, stronger, more resilient community.

As a member of the Scottish Communities Climate Action Network, we participated in their February 2014 Gathering that produced a shared vision for Scotland². On reflection, we feel this lacks sufficient emphasis on social justice and inclusion, a culture of creativity and innovation and cross-

¹ Revised 2015 version available here: <http://vision.sustainingdunbar.org/2025-local-resilience-action-plan/>

² This vision is available here: <http://www.scottishcommunitiescan.org.uk/vision-for-scotland-2024/>

community links and partnerships as vital components of resilient communities.

In November 2016, the Scottish Communities Climate Action Network convened a workshop for other member networks of the Scottish Community Alliance to collate views of the community sector to contribute to the drafting of the Climate Change Plan. The resulting paper³ makes a plea for commitment from local and national government to work with the community sector on the co-production and implementation of the Plan.

Our experience in Dunbar and District is that most people would be very happy to make many of the lifestyle changes required to reduce their household carbon footprint. However, they still face many barriers, as well as perverse incentives and mixed messages that discourage change.

At high level, these include a disconnect from the land and from 'local' democracy that creates a sense of disempowerment⁴ and lack of control over decisions which have a local impact. There are particular local issues around housing, land prices and lack of affordable (or any) workspace. Perverse incentives include flights being cheaper than trains whilst mixed messages include the Scottish Government's mantra of 'sustainable economic growth'.

As an organization we are very grateful for the various Scottish Government Grants, including from Climate Challenge Fund, that we have received to implement a wide range of projects in line with our Local Resilience Action Plan. However, together with Scottish Community Alliance, we would welcome a more joined-up approach to Government funding streams to encourage and enable longer-term, more strategic, local climate action focused on long-term transformational change through building community resilience, instead of a narrow focus on short-term projects and quick carbon savings.

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³ Available here: <http://www.scottishcommunitiescan.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/SCA-paper-Climate-Change-Plan.pdf>

⁴ This disconnect is explored further in the research paper: Community Resilience and the New Narrative of Community Empowerment in Scotland available here: <http://www.scottishcommunitiescan.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Community-Resilience-and-Community-Empowerment-in-Scotland-.pdf>