

PLP briefing note on the Friends of the Earth climate change campaign

19 September 2006

- The Labour Government is fully committed to our climate change goals. Labour's 2005 General Election Manifesto clearly stated that:

"First, climate change is the one of the most pressing challenges that the world faces. We will continue to lead internationally on climate change, and to strive for wider acceptance of the science and the steps needed to combat the problem. We will look beyond Kyoto and promote an international dialogue to reach agreement on the long-term goals and action needed to stabilise the level of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. We will also work for effective international action to adapt to the impacts of climate change."

The UK has already met its obligations under the Kyoto Protocol. We remain committed to achieving a 20 per cent reduction in carbon dioxide emissions on 1990 levels by 2010, and our review of progress this summer will show us how to get back on track. A 60 per cent reduction by 2050 remains necessary and achievable."

- We set out measures in the Climate Change Programme and Energy Review which mean we are on course to exceed our commitment under the Kyoto Protocol and to cut UK carbon dioxide emissions by about 16 per cent from the 1990 level by 2010, approaching but falling short of our target to cut emissions by 20 per cent.
- Government recognises that we need to do more to make progress towards our long term goal of cutting CO2 emissions by 60 per cent by 2050. Interim targets and milestones have a role to play but do not of themselves reduce emissions.
- We welcome the contribution made to the debate by Friends of the Earth and the Stop Climate Chaos coalition. There is a serious debate to be had about legislative frameworks and the role of targets and milestones. The Government is currently looking at the role of carbon budgeting as a means of helping to deliver our goals.
- However, proposals for legally binding annual targets are flawed. Emissions fluctuate from year to year due to factors outside the Government's control, such as the weather and the prices of different fuels, as well as the economic cycle. That is why international climate change policy frameworks such as the Kyoto Protocol and EU Emissions Trading Scheme are currently based on five-year phases.
- There is much debate about lengthening rather than shortening the phases. A further weakness of the Bill proposed by Friends of the Earth is that it wills the ends without willing the means, containing no actual measures to reduce emissions.