



## SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

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Our ref: 2003/0005800OR

3 April 2003

Dear Mr Muttitt

Thank you for your letter of 4 March to Iain Gray and Ross Finnie regarding Scottish higher education policy and climate change. I have been asked to respond on behalf of both Ministers.

Assessment of projected climate change by the world's leading scientists shows unprecedented rates of global warming, carrying risks to health, economic activity, food production, water resources and political stability. In light of this, the Scottish Executive is committed to working in partnership with the UK Government in achieving the UK Kyoto commitment of a 12.5% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2008-2012 and working toward the UK domestic goal of a 20% reduction in carbon dioxide emissions by 2010.

The *Scottish Climate Change Programme*, detailing the devolved measures aimed at tackling Scottish emissions of greenhouse gases, was published in November 2000. This programme contributes to the *UK Climate Change Programme* and both Programmes, along with other climate change related information, can be found on the Scottish Executive climate change website at [www.scotland.gov.uk/climatechange](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/climatechange).

The UK Government response to the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution's report, *Energy - The Changing Climate*, agreed with the recommendation that the UK should put itself on a path towards reductions in carbon dioxide emissions of some 60% from current levels by about 2050, and the Energy White Paper sets out the first steps to achieving this goal. The Executive welcomed this decision in its own response to the Royal Commission and, as with the *UK Climate Change Programme*, will work in partnership with the UK Government in playing a full part in delivering that objective. You may be interested to know that, since 1990, greenhouse gas emissions in Scotland have fallen by almost 5%.

Scottish Ministers are committed to supporting the accelerated development of renewable energy across Scotland. This commitment is a central plank of the *Scottish Climate Change Programme*. Indeed, Ross Finnie announced on 25 March that the Executive is formally adopting a new target for renewable electricity generation of 40% by 2020. Mr Finnie announced key actions in support of the target, including the creation of the Forum for Renewable Energy Development in Scotland, which will draw on existing industry and academic expertise to identify and co-ordinate actions to promote

the development of Scotland's renewable energy industry. The Forum has initially been tasked with producing action plans for the development of the biomass and marine renewables sectors in Scotland. Additionally the Executive will provide £2.125 million towards the creation of a Marine Energy Test Centre off Orkney.

This, in tandem with existing legislation which incentivises renewable energy production, should galvanise the nascent renewables industry in Scotland as well as protecting the environment for future generations. On offshore wind specifically, the Executive has recently granted consent for Scotland's first offshore wind farm, in the Solway Firth. We are also in discussions with another developer about an innovative deep water scheme in the Moray Firth.

Direct Government research funding for renewable energy is reserved to the Department of Trade and Industry. The current budget for renewable energy R&D is £18 million per annum. On the wider front, you may already be aware that the Executive, through Scottish Enterprise, is funding the creation of an Energy Intermediary Technology Institute (EITI). The purpose of the EITI is to encourage and support pre-competitive research in key market areas in which Scotland has a strong economic and business development potential. The primary focus of the EITI will be on renewable energy.

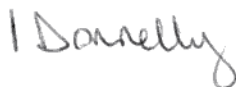
You have asked Mr Gray to review the funding of energy Research and Development in the higher education sector and also that Mr Gray issue specific advice to universities that they avoid supporting unsustainable energies. Ministers are precluded by legislation (section 42 of Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 1992) from directing funds to particular Higher Education Establishments or programmes of research. This is rightly a matter for the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council (SHEFC). SHEFC distributes most of its funding for research through block funds to the institutions and it is for each institution to decide how to use these funds.

You also suggest that science policy is geared towards 'wealth creation' and that higher education policy should incorporate the broader public interest. However, considerable care was taken when developing the Executive's Science Strategy, a copy of which I have enclosed, to recognise the vital contribution science makes to the well-being and quality of life of Scottish people, in areas such as health, the environment and food, as well as to Scotland's economic growth.

You may be aware that an independent Scottish Science Advisory Committee (SSAC) has recently been established to advise the Executive on the priorities for Scottish science and help it scan new horizons. The Committee is currently meeting a wide variety of bodies and individuals to inform its work. As the issues you raise are very relevant to the work of the Committee and the advice that it will provide the Executive, you may find it useful to contact SSAC. In the first instance you may wish to contact Dr Avril Davidson, Head of the Secretariat, at SSAC ([adavidson@scottishscience.org.uk](mailto:adavidson@scottishscience.org.uk)), which is located at the Royal Society of Edinburgh.

I hope this reply is useful.

Yours sincerely,



ISABELL DONNELLY