

**Tearfund's response to the Conservative Party's
Quality of Life Policy Group Report: *Blueprint for a Green Economy* –
Submission to the Shadow Cabinet
14th September 2007**

'The Quality of Life Policy Group was set up by David Cameron to recommend policies to the Shadow Cabinet. The remit of the Group was to consider holistically the issues of the built environment; rural life; food, farming, fishing and the marine environment; transport; energy; waste; and water.'

The final report is 550 pages long (<http://www.qualityoflifechallenge.com/>) containing a large number of proposals. The following brief was compiled by Tearfund on 14th September following the release of the report. We do not attempt to cover and respond to every area, but focus on a summary of recommendations related to climate change.

A Very Welcome Contribution

What does Tearfund think?

Tearfund very much welcomes this report, particularly the contribution it makes to the debate on action required in the UK and internationally in responding to climate change. The report highlights many important key messages including the need to make the link between environment and economy; the need to make Britain the world number one for energy efficiency; and the need to help individuals and industry make the right choices.

The report is clear in laying out the global goal of keeping temperature rise below 2 degrees, and that a new global agreement must be in place by the end of 2009 - key recommendations that Tearfund is pushing in the run up to the UN climate change talks in December. We are however disappointed that the report criticises the UNFCCC process without proposing specific recommendations on the way forward. In light of the urgency of agreeing a new global deal it is essential that the UN is made to work. We need to see a stronger signal from the Tories that the UN is the place where a global agreement must be forged. In addition, there is a lack of concrete proposals on how adaptation (which receives little attention) should be addressed in the global agreement where it must make up 50% of the deal.

In terms of action in the UK, we are glad to see our recommendations for the content of the Climate Change Bill endorsed – namely that the 2050 target must be at least 80% reductions in emissions, and that aviation and shipping should be included (this needs to happen as a matter of urgency).

The report makes lots of very practical proposals in key sectors of the UK economy to increase energy efficiency. Many of these proposals would require more research before being put into action (including to take into account the effect of any increase in green taxes on low income families, as the report itself points out) but they are welcomed for their attempt to make it easier for people to make the greener choice. It is also good to see that difficult areas such as aviation are not ignored.

Tearfund urges the Conservative Party to adopt the recommendations (with clearer and stronger messages to the UN talks) and turn this blueprint into official party policy.

What has been proposed?

'Our central thesis is that we can improve quality of life in Britain while taking significant amounts of carbon out of the economy. In fact it is time to debunk the myth that somehow there is a choice between the environment and the economy. The latter depends on the former in a way which we have collectively underestimated.'

Global goal and action on climate change:

- 'The British Government should be a more explicit supporter of the goal of limiting temperature increase to 2°C'
- The Climate Change Committee should advise on the appropriate stabilisation target range for greenhouse gas concentration that is compatible with the 2°C target
- A global agreement must be in place by the end of 2009
- Developed countries need to 'take a more effective lead in committing to reduce emissions significantly and be prepared to be accountable for compliance while also committing resources to help the vulnerable improve their resilience'.
- 'We must keep the UN show on the road but we cannot rely on it to get us where we need to be... Britain has a role to play, through the EU, in building a coalition of the ambitious to find common ground on ends and means.'

International adaptation

- We need a programme to ensure that developed countries meet existing commitments to provide support to vulnerable countries
- Future adaptation funding commitments should be linked to historic emissions and we need to identify new sources of funding

UK Climate Change Bill

- We must plan for emissions reductions of at least 80% by 2050, but the key targets are those for the period 2020-2030 – long term targets should be broken down into short-term milestones compatible with 2°C
- International aviation and shipping should ultimately be included in EU and UK-level targets

Specific actions in the UK

Buildings and homes

- Energy suppliers should be obliged to install smart meters.
- Partial rebate of stamp duty and pilot discounts in council tax for homes adopting recommended cost effective energy efficiency improvements
- Set a date beyond which no appliance will be sold that does not meet a defined standard for energy efficiency

Waste

- Landfill tax increased
- Ban established on the landfilling of all biodegradable materials by 2015 (paper, cardboard and organic waste)

Transport

- Increased funding for maintaining public transport and other lower carbon options
- Develop high speed rail links between North and South
- Graded purchase tax and variable VAT on new cars depending on emissions
- Taxing private non-residential off street parking space
- Hold on all plans for further airport expansion in the UK while in each case such plans are tested against the challenge of climate change
- Air passenger duty should be reformed as a per-flight rather than per-passenger charge for both passenger and freight aircraft