

Response to RACCE queries received 14th December 2015

CLIMATE CHANGE DUTIES – LISTED PUBLIC BODIES ANNUAL REPORTING

This document responds to the Committee's queries, dated 14 December 2015, about the Climate Change (Duties of Public Bodies: Reporting Requirements) (Scotland) Order 2015 (SSI 2015/347).

With regard to the query, raised by Claudia Beamish, concerning the Business and Regulatory Impact Assessment (BRIA) Report, which states that “no significant additional financial impact is foreseen, as most of these bodies already report broadly equivalent information on a voluntary basis.” I can confirm the purpose of the BRIA process is to assess the potential impacts of a proposal on wider business and regulation interests only, not, in this case, the reporting organisations. In this respect, I believe that few listed public bodies are likely to employ a private sector company to help prepare their climate change report. In line with most existing voluntary practice, I anticipate that data capture, recording and validation is likely to be undertaken by in-house staff, to reduce the timescale and cost. For this reason, the BRIA rightly does not anticipate a significant impact on the business community as a result of the reporting proposals.

With regard to validation, the new reporting form provides users with 3 options; external, internal or peer to peer. Validating reports prior to publication and submission is therefore discretionary, and this allows individual bodies to select their preferred option. However, the new reporting form does ask bodies to explain, if no validation of reported information has taken place, why. Based on the 2014/15 trial year reports received recently, most bodies have favoured internal validation. Organisations may also opt to use a peer to peer approach in order to avoid external costs, and this offers additional benefit through the exchange best practice and learning.

In relation to comments on reporting variability, I agree that reporting capability varies greatly across the public sector, and some bodies will need to catch up, however as Committee members will be aware, the new reporting requirement replaces previous reporting mechanisms and the majority of bodies have already been engaged in reporting climate change information for 4 to 6 years. I recognise that additional time may be needed for bodies to adjust their information and datasets to fit the new reporting form. I expect that the impact of this difference in capabilities will diminish over time as bodies understanding of reporting and data capture procedures improve. .

In this regard, of the 151 bodies covered by the new Order (updated from the 148 identified as major players in 2011, due to changes in status and subsequent mergers), only 10 are new to climate change reporting. These 10 new bodies will need to consider the resource implications of compliance with the annual reporting requirement and are being encouraged to use the free advisory services provided by our support programmes. Clearly, this work will require resources, but it's important these bodies join the rest of the major players in annually reporting compliance with

the duties. The cost of doing so, is considered an integral part of the responsible management of publically funded organisations.

On Sarah Boyack's comment, I agree it is critical that climate change best practice is shared effectively, to enable others to replicate measures across the sector. Scottish Government funded networks and support programmes delivered by the Sustainable Scotland Network, Resource Efficient Scotland, Adaptation Scotland and Zero Waste Scotland all promote best practice techniques and signpost users to a wide range of climate change case study material on their websites. This includes funding from Transport Scotland for the Energy Saving Trust to provide best practice guidance to organisations, including public bodies, on implementing a range of sustainable transport measures. I'm pleased to be able to report that Police Scotland, and other recently created or merged bodies, are already working with our support partners to enable accurate and complete 2015/16 reports for the first year of required reporting to be prepared, validated and submitted by 30 November 2016.

In summary, as the committee will be aware, the new "required" reporting form will capture information on the key emission sources and other governance, adaptation and sustainable procurement issues, including basic transport and business travel data. The "recommended" reporting form provides further opportunities for bodies to voluntarily record area-wide emissions, behaviour change and resource efficiency information. Both sets of reported information will be annually assessed to help monitor compliance with the duties and build up a clear picture of sector activity and progress in order to inform Scottish Government policy and support in the future.

I trust this information is useful and addresses the queries raised.

Judith Young
Public Bodies Duties Team Leader
17/12/15