The Climate Change Bill received its second reading in the House of Commons on 9 June. There was clear cross-party support for the Bill overall, which the House endorsed through a vote at the end of the debate by a majority of 344 to 3.

**Government proposals for changes to the Bill**

In his opening speech the Bill Minister, Phil Woolas, set out the main changes the Government proposes to make to the Bill as it stands following consideration by the House of Lords. It was clear from the wide-ranging views expressed in debate that all these changes will be subject to close scrutiny as the Bill is considered in Committee.

*Purpose clause*

The Government proposes to remove Clause 1 of the Bill (the “purpose clause”). The Minister’s view was that “any measure based on global temperatures means that we are dependent on what happens elsewhere the world – in other words, on things outside of our direct control.”

*Responsibilities on the Prime Minister*

At present, the Bill requires the Prime Minister to lay before Parliament the required five-yearly report setting out the Government’s proposals and policies for meeting carbon budgets. The Government will seek to restore this responsibility to the Secretary of State, consistent with the other duties in the Bill, and as is usual in a system of collective Government responsibility.

*Emissions reductions in the UK*

The Minister announced the Government’s intention to strengthen its commitment in the Bill to building a low-carbon economy in the UK, but that it was unable to accept the limit imposed in the House of Lords on the balance between action at domestic, European and international levels.

*Single-use carrier bags*

The Minister announced the Government’s intention to bring forward proposals for a power to require retailers to charge for single-use carrier bags, for use if radical and swift reductions in their use are not achieved through voluntary agreement with retailers.

*Corporate disclosure of carbon emissions*

The Government recognises that action is desirable in this area, not least to encourage the development of a standard that will support comparable
emissions reporting. While not being persuaded that mandatory reporting is an effective means of encouraging emissions reductions, the Minister proposed a requirement for the Secretary of State to develop and issue guidance on how companies should report their greenhouse gas emissions. The Government will also look further at taking forward the issue of emissions reporting in 2010, in parallel with the anticipated review of the narrative reporting requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

**Other issues discussed**

The debate also covered a number of other issues, with three being of particular interest:

**2050 target**
Peers had agreed that the most pragmatic approach to the Bill’s long-term target was to require the Committee on Climate Change to make recommendations on the level of the target by 1 December 2008. The Government continues to support this approach; there were mixed views elsewhere in the Commons.

**International aviation and shipping**
The Government announced that it intended to largely accept the Bill’s provisions as amended in the Lords, so that within five years of Royal Assent the Government would either need to include those emissions in our targets or report to Parliament on why this had not been done. Views were varied elsewhere in the House, with some support for the existing provisions and some pressure for the immediate inclusion of international aviation emissions in particular.

**Adaptation**
The Government proposes to accept the amendment made by the House of Lords which provides for a dedicated sub-committee of the Committee on Climate Change, and will bring forward further proposals to ensure that the work of the sub-committee is consistent with that of the Committee as a whole. The debate emphasised the importance of an effective response to the immediate impacts of climate change.

**Next steps**

We expect that a Committee of the House of Commons will complete its detailed consideration of the Bill before the summer recess (23 July), and that Royal Assent will be obtained in the autumn.

Further information, including an updated Impact Assessment for the Bill as introduced to the Commons, can be found at:


Climate Change Bill Team