



Monday 29 November 2004 17:00

Department for Environment, Food And Rural Affairs (National)

SECRETARY OF STATE MARGARET BECKETT ATTENDS DEFRA EAST MIDLANDS CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE

Climate change left unchecked could lead to significant rises in sea levels along the East coast of England and a rise in temperatures of 3C by the end of the century.

Sea levels could rise by between 22-83cm by 2050, causing coastal erosion, while changes in climatic conditions will mean the likelihood of more severe storms.

Speaking at a pilot regional climate change conference in Buxton this evening, Margaret Beckett, Secretary of State for the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, said climate change was already affecting and would continue to affect everyone.

Mrs Beckett highlighted the recently updated report, "The Potential impacts of climate change in the East Midlands," which says the region could expect to see:

- * increased temperatures, evaporation and changing rainfall patterns, which will mean less water available from the River Trent and Derwent Valley reservoir system
- * the potential loss of the most south easterly raised peat bogs in the UK in the Peak District
- * the loss of coastal habitats due to erosion, including loss of mudflats used by wading birds on the East coast.
- * the increased likelihood of summer droughts which will lead to increased demand for irrigation for the region's salad, potatoes, herbs and vegetable crops.

Speaking to representatives from the local government community, Mrs Beckett said they had a major role to play in enabling the UK to meet its national targets for reducing emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases.

The Environment Secretary urged local councils to sign up to the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change, which requires local authorities to work with the community to develop an action plan to tackle climate change at a local level.

It allows councils to state openly their commitment to:

- * working with central government in delivering the UK climate change programme.
- * encouraging the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in their local communities
- * providing opportunities for renewable energy generation within the local area
- * preparing a plan to address the causes and effects of climate change.

"Councils are central to our efforts to tackle climate change. Everything from transport, house building to the energy efficiency of public buildings is affected by - and affects - the changing climate.

"Climate change may be a global problem, but councils are part of the solution. They must work together with their communities to make a difference - not only to prepare for climate change but also to reduce the emissions that cause it," she said.

Mrs Beckett added that good environmental policy not only lifted everyone's quality of life but it made good business sense. For example, BP's internal emissions trading scheme - which had an initial outlay of \$20m, ended up making energy efficiency savings of \$650m as well as reducing emissions by 20 per cent.

NOTES TO EDITORS

1 Secretary of State Margaret Beckett presented the key-note speech at the East Midlands Climate Change conference at the Palace Hotel, Buxton this evening. She spoke alongside Nick King two representatives from local Government and the regional business community.

2 "The Potential impacts of climate change in the East Midlands" report was first published by the East Midlands Sustainable Development Round Table in 2000. It was updated in June 2004.

3 The Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change is a voluntary initiative for local authorities and has so far been taken up by more than 60 councils.

4 The Government has set targets to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 20 per cent by 2010 and 60 per cent by 2050, from a 1990 base level. It has also set a target of producing 20 per cent of electricity by renewable sources by 2020.

5 A copy of the SoS's speech is available on the Defra website. It can be accessed from tomorrow (Tues) at <http://www.defra.gov.uk>

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