

**Speech by Elliot Morley at the Town & Country Planning Association conference  
“Planning for climate change”, City Hall, London, 26 January 2006**

Good morning ladies and gentlemen. I'm very pleased to be sharing this platform with Baroness Andrews from ODPM because if we are serious about tackling climate change, then we do have to address this across all functions of Government. The planning system and process is an absolutely crucial part in that, and it does have a vital role in helping us meet our ambitious goals in combating climate change. It's good to see so many professionals here today, who I know share that view.

Baroness Andrews, whose Department - ODPM - leads on planning policy, will discuss in greater depth what the Government is doing to enhance the capability of the planning system to meet the challenges of climate change. In this short session I will talk about the wider picture of 'Planning for climate change', including recent developments of significance at an international and domestic level to tackle climate change, and action at a local level.

Working with the international community on what is a global issue is of critical importance, the Government believes, in responding to the challenge of climate change. I think it is worth my remarking upon some recent key developments. I was pleased to see that climate change was placed at the very top of the agenda by the Prime Minister for both the UK's Presidencies of the G8 Group of industrialised nations and of the European Union last year. This, combined with the entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol in February last year, (when it was ratified by Russia) has helped revitalise the international resolve to face up to the challenge of climate change.

At the Gleneagles Summit in July of last year, leaders of all the G8 countries agreed for the first time that climate change is a man-made problem requiring a rapid response. The G8 also agreed to a comprehensive programme of specific actions on low carbon energy and energy efficiency; and the Gleneagles Plan of Action which is designed to have a life beyond our G8 Presidency and set up a dialogue not only with the G8, but with the emerging industrial nations – the plus five group, China, India, Mexico, Brazil, South Africa – in terms of the role that they can play in relation to dealing with climate change.

In addition to action on renewable energy, transport and industry, the Gleneagles Plan of Action includes specific measures relating to the built environment. The International Energy Agency, which has estimated that buildings account for between 29 and 46 per cent of total final energy consumption across the G8, has been invited to review existing building standards and codes in both developed and developing countries, devise energy indicators to assess efficiency, and identify policy best practices.

Heads of Government also launched the Dialogue on Climate Change, Clean Energy and Sustainable Development, to monitor the implementation of the Plan of Action and discuss what further action can be taken. This will report back to the G8 Summit in Japan in 2008.

This significant progress at Gleneagles was followed in December by major breakthroughs at the eleventh United Nations Conference on climate change in Montreal. The Conference launched a process among Kyoto Parties to determine further action on greenhouse gas emissions after the Kyoto Protocol's first commitment period

ends in 2012, thus securing a future for the Kyoto process. All Parties, including those that have not ratified the Protocol (such as the United States and Australia) also agreed to start discussions on further action on climate change through the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

We intend, in the forthcoming year, to preserve the momentum generated by our presidencies, and to ensure that the issue of climate change remains high on the international agenda.

While we must address these issues of climate change on the international level because of its global implications, each of us as individual countries have responsibilities and each of us must make our own contribution. On the domestic level, I am very pleased to say that the UK is on track to meet its Kyoto target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 12.5% below base year levels by 2008-12. And we are one of the few industrial countries that's well on track. But we believe in the UK that that is but the first step, and if we are to make a real difference in terms of combating climate change, we have to do much more than what we've agreed so far within the Kyoto process. So we have our own domestic targets of a 20% reduction in carbon dioxide emissions by 2010, and a longer term goal of a 60% reduction by 2050. Now those are ambitious targets and it is fair to say that at the moment we are not on track to meet those targets by 2010, so therefore there are more measures that we need to introduce in the UK in terms of meeting our own voluntary domestic targets that go beyond the Kyoto commitments.

As many of you will know, we are very close to completing our review of the UK Climate Change Programme, which is designed to put us back on a course to achieving these goals. The existing programme contains a number of policies in areas on which the planning system has a direct bearing, including the promotion of renewable energy and adaptation to climate change. Prior to its publication, I cannot comment on the contents of the revised programme, but I can tell you that we have been considering how the planning system can help us realise our climate change objectives. Not least because of the enormous contribution that buildings make to emissions in our country. Therefore if we're serious about tackling emissions, we've got to look at designs, building standards, and planning, and that must be part of the action.

Action at a local and regional level is essential in mitigating and adapting to climate change, and it is here that the planning system can play a particularly important role. I know Baroness Andrews will go into this in more depth in her speech later this morning, but I would like to mention a few of our initiatives which have an important influence on the contribution of the planning system to tackling climate change at the local and regional level.

A high level of awareness and understanding of climate change across society is necessary if the planning system is to be responsive to climate change. To us it is of paramount importance that all who engage in the planning process - those who work up plans for developments, those who decide whether to grant planning permission and those who appeal against these decisions - appreciate the reality of climate change. In December last year, Margaret Beckett and I launched the Climate Change Communications Initiative to change public attitudes to climate change and reach new audiences. Among a number of measures, this initiative includes a fund containing up to £6 million to be distributed through the duration of this three-year campaign. Importantly, this fund will be targeted at bodies and groups at a local level. What we're trying to do is

work with a bottom up rather than top down process and engage community groups and groups who are active already in terms of working with the public in getting these messages over.

Defra has also been making headway in developing valuable statistical data on local emissions of carbon dioxide which will help local authorities to assess levels of emissions in their area and develop emissions reduction strategies. Regardless of how successful we are in reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the coming years, a certain amount of climate change is inevitable due to the time it takes for the atmosphere to respond to changes in emissions of greenhouse gases. My Department is therefore leading on the production of an Adaptation Policy Framework for the UK. It should provide stronger strategic direction by setting agreed cross-cutting objectives and measuring progress. Defra - along with the Three Regions Climate Change Partnership and other co-funders - is also currently sponsoring a research study on adaptation responses to climate change for new development in the Government's Growth Areas in the wider South East of England. This study seeks to develop guidance on how climate change adaptation measures can be taken into account by those working in the Growth Areas at the development project scale. I very much welcome the work that the GLA have been doing on this. They're certainly a very good example in terms of their own ideas, and the opportunities that arise with new developments like Thames Gateway, where there is real potential for building exemplars in terms of planning and design. This project is seeking to provide practical guidance on the basis of case study work, and will provide a valuable tool for planning decision makers everywhere.

There is no doubt to me that the planning profession, and those that you advise, have the will to help us mitigate and adapt to climate change. The contribution that you make could prove critical in determining the extent to which we achieve our climate change goals. This government will continue to listen to your ideas and advice about ways in which the planning system can help us realise our climate change objectives. I look forward to reading "Sustainable energy by design", which you are to launch later today. So we are facing great challenges in terms of climate change. If anything the latest science suggests that the effects of climate change have been faster and are more profound than were originally thought. But with those challenges come some real opportunities for innovative planning, innovative architecture, innovative design, innovative strategic approaches in terms of our communities, our public transport systems our economic activities. I think that with those opportunities there is a real will among the planning community to address these in both providing more sustainable homes, more sustainable communities for people to live in, but above all to use the planning system to address the very real and serious threat that we face from climate change.

Thanks very much.