

The Kyoto Protocol

Background

- There has been increasing concern in recent years about the impact of human activity on the global climate. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change began to address this in the late 1980's and was adopted at the United Nations Headquarters, New York on the 9 May 1992.
- The text of the Protocol to the UNFCCC was adopted at the third session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC in Kyoto, Japan, on 11 December 1997.
- Under the Kyoto Protocol, industrialised countries and those in transition to a market economy (called "Annex I countries") have agreed to limit or reduce their emissions of these greenhouse gases and each nation has a specific individual target for a reduced emission level between 2008 and 2012.
- On 16th February 2005 the Protocol came into force following ratification by Russia, which met the requirement of ratification by at least 55 countries, including Annex I countries, accounting for at least 55% of this industrialised group's emissions in 1990.
- However, it is notable that the US (responsible for about 25% of global greenhouse gas emissions) and Australia have not ratified the protocol.
- The Protocol is the first international agreement designed to tackle the issue of climate change and paves the way for greater international efforts and further agreements in this area.

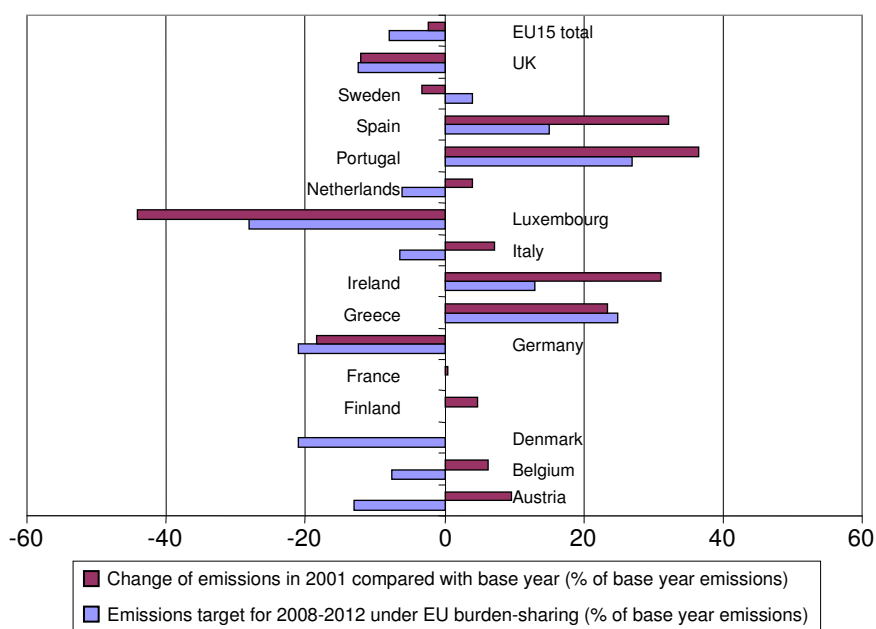
The Kyoto Mechanisms and Targets

- To achieve these targets the countries can use domestic action to reduce national emissions and if they choose supplement this by use of the Kyoto mechanisms: Joint Implementation (JI) or Clean Development Mechanism (CDM).
- JI involves emission reductions which arise from project investments in other countries with their own Kyoto emission targets – i.e. other Annex I countries
- CDM involves emission reductions arising from project investments in developing countries which do not have their own Kyoto emission targets – i.e. non-Annex I countries
- These mechanisms are based on the principle that no matter where the gases come from the impact on the environment is the same and reductions in emissions should come from the places where it will cost the least.
- The UK's commitment under the protocol is for a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions of 12.5% from 1990 levels by 2008-2012. This implies an 8% reduction in CO₂ emissions over this time period.
- The UK government also has an aspirational target for itself of a 20% reduction of CO₂ emissions by 2010, demonstrating the importance of this issue for the current government.
- In response to its Kyoto commitments the UK Government established its Climate Change Programme. The UK Programme draws on a range of instruments,

including Renewables Obligations, the Climate Change Levy, Energy Efficiency Commitments, and the UK and EU Emissions Trading Schemes.

- The Government’s Energy White Paper, published in early 2003, outlined further measures to reduce emissions from the energy sector.
- The majority of the EU countries are currently well off their targets and much work needs to be done to ensure the EU as a whole meets its Kyoto commitment of an 8% reduction.

EU Member State progress against Kyoto commitments



British Energy’s position

- British Energy believes nuclear generation has an important role in meeting the UK’s current Kyoto target and any subsequent target.
- We believe that if the UK government is to demonstrate international leadership in tackling climate change then it should focus its efforts on achieving domestic action.
- The EUETS is an important instrument for achieving Kyoto targets within the EU, and tougher targets will be needed during the Kyoto period than in Phase I of the EUETS if member states are to meet their international commitments.