

CLIMATE CHANGE IS BRINGING OPPORTUNITIES AS WELL AS CHALLENGES TO SCOTTISH BUSINESSES

Climate change is bringing opportunities as well as challenges to Scottish businesses, Government Minister Stewart Stevenson told an event organised by the Business Environment Partnership (BEP).

Speaking at a BEP workshop on climate change in Aberdeen the Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change said the low carbon goods and services market was forecast to grow exponentially in coming years. Perhaps no sector was set to grow more than green energy and Scotland was better placed than most to exploit it.

Scotland's renewable energy potential was unrivalled in Europe, and its offshore renewables potential alone could meet the country's electricity needs several times over, the Minister said.

Increased temperatures could allow new crops to be grown. Forests could be grown at higher altitudes. Warmer, drier summers could increase potential for tourism, particularly as more traditional summer destinations started to look less attractive.

Scotland has set targets to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases by at least 42% by 2020 and at least 80% by 2050.

The Minister said business and industry account for over 50% of Scottish end-user greenhouse gas emissions. It was fortunate that so many of the country's leading business people were engaged in the climate change agenda, he added.

A great deal of expectation had been placed on last December's Copenhagen climate change conference, Mr Stevenson told his audience. Although the UN process did not deliver the hoped-for commitments to emission cuts or a timetable for a new treaty, the Copenhagen Accord could be seen as a first step towards a workable international agreement capable of delivering the required global response.

ENDS