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Introduction

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Alongside its research into the Scottish economy, the Fraser of Allander Institute has a growing reputation for research into environmental and energy issues that impact the Scottish and UK economies. FAI researchers and associates currently hold a number of grants from the UK Research Councils and the EU FP7 programme to investigate issues such as the introduction of different renewable technologies, energy efficiency and pollution embodied in interregional and international trade flows. Moreover, the researchers on these projects are all active members of the Scottish Institute for Research in Economics (SIRE) Environmental and Energy Economics (EEE) Workshop, which has been set up to foster collaborative activity among colleagues at the eight main Scottish universities.

The publication of this special issue of the Fraser Economic Commentary coincides with the end of a project funded by the UK Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), based at the Universities of Strathclyde and University of Stirling, and with the support and involvement of the FAI team throughout. The project is one of six ESRC Climate Change Leadership Fellowships awarded in 2008. Therefore, it is an exciting development that this special issue, under the guest editorship of the Fellowship team, gives us the opportunity to highlight some of the cutting edge economic research into energy and environmental problems being conducted primarily at the Universities of Strathclyde and Stirling, but involving collaboration with colleagues throughout the UK and across the world.

Our first two papers, co-authored with a number of Fellowship collaborators, focus on our research into accounting for carbon generation associated with economic activities in the UK national and regional economies. These papers present non-technical expositions of new results, not yet published in the academic literature. This is entirely consistent with the priority placed on knowledge exchange that is shared by both the ESRC Climate Change Leadership Fellowship programme and by the Fraser of Allander Institute.

In the other five papers, we present papers from other research projects based at the Universities of Strathclyde and Stirling, but which share the common theme of contributing to knowledge and understanding of the energy

and environmental problems underlying climate change. The third paper, contributed by colleagues based at FAI provides an overview of Scottish Climate Change Policy, while the fourth, titled 'Stimulating Diffusion of Low-Carbon Technology: Evidence from a Voluntary Program', contributed by colleagues at Stirling, provides perspectives from policies implemented in the US.

In the final three papers, we turn our attention specifically to energy issues. The fifth paper, titled 'The Rebound Effect: Some Questions Answered' focuses on some key issues arising from another ESRC funded project, based at the Universities of Stirling and Strathclyde on the unanticipated impacts of increased energy efficiency. This is followed by two papers focussing on specific areas of energy policy concern: one titled 'Preferences for Energy Futures in Scotland', contributed by colleagues based at Stirling, and the other titled 'The electricity generation mix in Scotland: The long and windy road?', which closes the issue by reporting on research funded by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) at the University of Strathclyde.

We hope that this special issue of the Fraser Economic Commentary, the first of its kind, stimulates discussion on a variety of climate change related topics among the academic, business and policy communities within Scotland and beyond.