



OFFICIAL REPORT
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee

Tuesday 20 December 2022

Session 6



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CONTENTS

	Col.
DECISIONS ON TAKING BUSINESS IN PRIVATE	1
CLIMATE CHANGE COMMITTEE'S REVIEW OF SCOTTISH EMISSIONS TARGETS AND PROGRESS REPORT 2022	2
SUBORDINATE LEGISLATION.....	37
Public Service Vehicles (Registration of Local Services) (Provision of Service Information) (Scotland)	
Regulations 2022 (SSI 2022/358)	37

NET ZERO, ENERGY AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

34th Meeting 2022, Session 6

CONVENER

*Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands) (Con)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Fiona Hyslop (Linlithgow) (SNP)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Jackie Dunbar (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)

*Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con)

*Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab)

*Ash Regan (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)

*Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:

Professor Keith Bell (Climate Change Committee)

Marili Boufounou (Climate Change Committee)

Rt Hon The Lord Deben (Climate Change Committee)

Emily Nurse (Climate Change Committee)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Peter McGrath

LOCATION

The Mary Fairfax Somerville Room (CR2)

Scottish Parliament
Net Zero, Energy and Transport
Committee

Tuesday 20 December 2022

[The Convener opened the meeting at 09:48]

Decisions on Taking Business in
Private

The Convener (Edward Mountain): Good morning, everyone, and welcome to the 34th meeting in 2022 of the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee.

The first item on the agenda is a decision on whether to take items 4, 5 and 6 in private. Item 4 is consideration of the evidence that we will hear under item 2, item 5 is consideration of a draft letter to the Scottish Government and item 6 is consideration of a draft report on the legislative consent memorandum on the Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill. Do we agree to take those items in private?

Members indicated agreement.

The Convener: We must also consider whether to take in private at future meetings our consideration of the committee's approach to scrutiny of the outcomes of the 15th United Nations conference of the parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity—COP15—and consideration of the committee's draft report on the role of local government and its cross-sectoral partners in financing and delivering a net zero Scotland. Do we agree to take those items in private?

Members indicated agreement.

Climate Change Committee's
Review of Scottish Emissions
Targets and Progress Report
2022

09:49

The Convener: Before we move to item 2, I declare an interest. As members will know from my entry in the register of members' interests, I have an interest in an agricultural farming partnership and in property rental markets. I want to get that on the record because some of the subject areas that we will cover today will include those.

Item 2 is an evidence session on the Climate Change Committee's recently published review of Scottish emissions targets and its progress report to the Scottish Parliament. On 7 December, the CCC laid in the Parliament its 11th annual progress report, as required by the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009. The report sets out 99 recommendations to the Scottish Government for meeting Scotland's emissions reduction targets for the years 2020, 2030 and 2045. I refer members to the relevant papers under agenda item 2.

I welcome our witnesses from the Climate Change Committee, who join us remotely. They are the Rt Hon the Lord Deben, who is the chairman; Professor Keith Bell, Scotland champion; and Marili—I am going to get this wrong. Is it Marili? Sorry, I am fudging my words. We have with us Marili Boufounou—I hope that I finally got that right—who is an analyst of the devolved Administrations, and Emily Nurse, who is team leader of carbon budgets. I thank you all for accepting our invitation. We are delighted to have you here. Before we ask questions, I invite Lord Deben to make an opening statement.

Rt Hon The Lord Deben (Climate Change Committee): Thank you very much. I am very sorry that I am not with you in person, as I had intended to be. However, you will be pleased that I am not there, because I have the filthiest of colds, which you would not like to have caught. In addition, the train service in the east of England, where I come from, is quite difficult, unfortunately.

Anyway, we are all here. Well, Chris Stark is actually in bed, so he is not with us, and I apologise for him for that. He, too, is sorry; he is not all that far away, as he is in Glasgow, which is where he comes from.

On our report, I am sorry that we have not been able to continue to give the congratulations that we have been able to give in the past to the Scottish Government and Scottish people for the

work that they are doing to address climate change. As you know, we have used Scotland as an example to the rest of the United Kingdom in relation to some of the things that you have been doing.

Unfortunately, this year, when it was time for us to look at achievement on delivery, we had to say that, on a wide range of things, delivery had not been satisfactory. That is very important because, if it is not satisfactory, that puts greater weight on what has to be done in succeeding years. As a United Kingdom and as individual countries, we are now committed to targets for 2030 and 2035, as well as for 2050. The Scottish Government has helpfully and usefully made it clear internationally that Scotland will want to lead in that regard. Our problem—not just in Scotland but, frankly, throughout the UK—is that it is easier to make policy than it is to deliver. I can say that after 16 years of being a minister; I have noticed that right the way through. It does not much matter who is in charge; it is always more difficult to deliver.

Therefore, it is with sadness that we have had to say that there are a series of things that have to be improved if Scotland is to remain on course. I want to make it clear that we are very keen on pointing out when Scotland cannot do what it should do because of problems with the relationships with the UK as a whole. However, in this case, we have to say that the areas that we have highlighted are areas in which the Scottish Government has control and that some of the areas of relative success are areas in which the UK as a whole has control. Therefore, it is not possible to say, “Well, this is all a problem between us”, although I must say in advance that it is really important for the relationships on climate change between the devolved Governments and the UK Government to become much closer and much more iterative, because, in the end, we have to solve these problems and many of them can be solved only by joint action.

The Convener: Thank you very much for that. As the convener, I get the first question. I am not sure who will want to answer this; if you would like to answer it, just raise your hand and I will bring you in. The danger is that, if no one raises their hand, I will arbitrarily pick somebody, which we do not want.

Lord Deben, I do not know whether you are saying something to me, but your microphone is off. When you indicate that you want to speak, I can bring you in. Did you want to say something?

Lord Deben: I just want to say that, if there is any difficulty with nobody answering, I am prepared to order somebody to do so, if I might put it like that.

The Convener: Of course, as an ex-soldier, I like the idea of ordering somebody to answer, but it does not always work.

Could we please have a couple of examples of good-news projects in which the UK has worked together with Scotland to achieve a target, and a couple of brief examples of areas in which they have failed to work together but could have worked together and achieved more than has been achieved? I do not know who would like to start off with that question.

Lord Deben: Marili Boufounou or Emily Nurse, please. Emily?

The Convener: Emily, you are starting off.

Emily Nurse (Climate Change Committee): I am sorry—I cannot hear very well. My headphones were not plugged in. Will you repeat the question?

The Convener: Yes. I am looking for a couple of examples of targets being achieved by the UK and Scotland working together as a whole and a couple of areas in which targets have not been achieved because there has not been combined working.

Emily Nurse: When you say targets, I suppose that I will have to talk more about plans. For example, Scotland’s plan was to have quite a heavy reliance on greenhouse gas removals for the 2030 target; in fact, it was to be about two thirds of the UK-wide target for greenhouse gas removals. That was based on the assumption that the Scottish Cluster would be chosen for track 1 of the carbon capture, utilisation and storage cluster sequencing programme. A bid was put in, but it went on the reserve list, and that has had a knock-on effect on hitting targets, because there was a huge reliance on that. That is an example in which there was not good co-ordination.

Scotland wants to go a lot further across all sectors by 2030 than the UK, which means that, in buildings and transport, for example, decarbonisation has to happen much faster in Scotland than in the UK. I do not think that there has been discussion about how that will happen, given that, on rolling out heat pumps, for example, the UK targets are slower than the Scottish ones. Scottish policy relies on the market-based approach, but the UK Government has to get that out, without much extra policy on top at the moment, so there has not been discussion about how Scotland will go above and beyond the UK rates. Similarly, in transport, electric vehicles must be rolled out much faster in Scotland to reach the incredibly challenging decarbonisation target in that sector, but there has not really been discussion about how that will be achieved.

I think that Keith Bell wants to chip in.

The Convener: I am looking for a good example. Those both seem to be negative ones. Marili Boufounou, do you have a good example? Perhaps Lord Deben does.

Professor Keith Bell (Climate Change Committee): I can come in.

The Convener: Keith, is that you?

10:00

Professor Bell: Yes. Good morning, everybody. To date, perhaps the biggest success story about emissions reductions over the past 10 or 20 years has been in the energy sector and, in particular, in the development of renewables.

Energy is, of course, a reserved power to Westminster. However, the success of the development of renewables has depended not just on market mechanisms that were set up by the UK Government but on the environment for investment that was created in Scotland, through positive approaches to planning, a general encouragement of investment, the leadership that was shown by some of the companies that are based in Scotland and the ability to make use of our natural resources here. That enormous success story has been built on the efforts of many parties.

The Convener: Lord Deben, do you want to come in? I saw that your hand was raised.

Lord Deben: What Emily Nurse said is important in the sense that you were pressing for specific examples. Unfortunately, the generality of Scotland having tougher targets, which were laid down by the Scottish Parliament, has not resulted in a relationship with the United Kingdom Government that has made meeting those targets possible. We do not suggest that that is the fault of either side, but it is just not happening in the sense that, if Scotland is to do better, which is what it is committed to, the United Kingdom Government has to make it possible for it to do better. It has to do that in a number of ways, and those that Emily Nurse mentioned are the most important.

As I said in my introduction, the most important thing is that there is a constant iterative process, so that both sides can see how they can help the other to deliver what is both a separate and a single commitment—separate because there are separate targets and different ways of doing things, but united because that is what we have said internationally the United Kingdom will deliver.

The Convener: That is very helpful. Mark Ruskell has some questions.

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): Good morning; it is good to see you all

again. I want to ask about how Governments make decisions that are in line with net zero and targets and lead to the delivery programmes that are needed on the ground. You will be aware of the work of the Scottish Parliament, the Scottish Government and the Fraser of Allander Institute in producing a report on budget reforms. The report focuses on the practice of how Government makes decisions as well as on a critical net zero test. The three steps that were agreed within that are the introduction of a climate narrative into this year's budget, a revision to the taxonomy in next year's budget and the full implementation of a net zero test across Government the year after that.

I want to get your views on that. Is that the right approach, or is something missing? What is your analysis of how Government intends to make decisions going forward?

Lord Deben: All those things are extremely useful, because they all ensure that there is a common purpose running through the way that the Government operates. Looking at the whole of the United Kingdom, what we notice most is not just the disconnect between the joint actions of the countries but the silos within countries, between ministries and between Government and local government. Therefore, creating such a structure would be valuable. However, we hope that you would introduce it in a way that was sensitive to the fact that when you do one of those things, you do not just plonk down an answer; you have to look very carefully at how it will land and how people can buy into it.

Some of the things that have been recommended are, academically, absolutely right, but you have to deal with people, so we would very much advise having a degree of sensitivity, which I am sure that you will be able to do. One of the advantages of being rather smaller, because of devolution, is that you are able to do that.

Mark Ruskell: Are there any other reflections on the exact actions that the Scottish Government has agreed in relation to budget? What would you expect to see in the years ahead, for example? Other witnesses might want to come in on that.

Marili Boufounou (Climate Change Committee): I should start by clarifying that, unfortunately, I have not had the chance to review in detail the budget and the work by the Fraser of Allander Institute. However, from speaking to the institute in the past, and following a series of visits that the committee carried out throughout the UK and in Scotland, one thing that came out strongly was a disconnect between the way that policy is designed and evaluated, the way that funding for such policy is allocated and the achievement of the outcomes that are aligned with tackling climate change. The issue is that, sometimes, the outcomes are more long term and designed to

span a number of years, but, fundamentally, the way that we design policy in the UK and in Scotland is much more short term than that.

Therefore, in the Scotland progress report, we identified the need for changes to the way that policy is designed and outcomes are decided, and for funding to follow that. We heard a lot about the inability to deliver policy on a local level, for example, because the funding was not sufficient to allow the necessary amount of time for it to be deemed successful, or because it was not supported by the long-term certainty that is required to allow private funding to be brought in or to allow policy makers to design it for the longer term.

That is probably one of the biggest challenges. Another is the net zero test, which would allow the Scottish Government to centrally identify those elements of policy that are aligned with—or which need to be aligned with—reducing emissions and adapting to climate change. The committee has spoken about the net zero test in the past. We would support something like that. It is just a matter of doing it in a way that does not just add to the amount of bureaucratic work that needs to be done in policy design, but instead delivers specific gains and targets specific projects in a way that identifies the right outcomes and helps Government move towards achieving them.

Professor Bell: I echo the welcome for the three actions in principle. They sound like the right things to do.

I will build on what Marili Boufounou said. Quantified analysis to back up the propositions is really important. In our progress report this year, that is something that we have observed is missing from significant areas of policy from Scottish Government. We were assured by Mr Matheson, for example, that the work is on-going and that we will see some of that quantified analysis coming out soon.

Related to that is the monitoring of outcomes. Of course, it is right that we set policy and put it into action, but the outcomes then need to be monitored to see whether they are effective in the way that was anticipated, and to adjust the policy if necessary.

Another thing that we have observed in our progress report this year is that, in a number of areas, the data are not sufficient to allow us to see whether action is progressing in the right direction. As Marili said, a lot of these things are kind of long term so, in the short term, we are looking for certain things to start ramping up. If that is not happening, the significant progress later in the decade or in the next decade will be very difficult to achieve.

There are all sorts of interdependencies, as we know, which is why a test across multiple departments is important. As Marili also said, the private sector is extremely important in building up supply chains, skills and so on, and that takes time to develop. We need to have data to see whether that really is being developed so that we have the opportunity to adjust policy if necessary.

The Convener: Lord Deben, it might be helpful if we pose questions and you use your good military standing, as it were, to order the right person to answer. Maybe that is a twist in my way of looking at the issue—perhaps you should suggest who answers, rather than ordering it.

Monica Lennon has a question.

Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab): Good morning to the panel. I hope that you feel better soon, Lord Deben, and best wishes to Chris Stark as well. It is a shame that he was not able to join the panel today. I listened to the webinar last week when your report was launched and, like many others, I was worried by what we heard. However, today we want to focus on what can be done and what tools the Scottish Government and partners are not currently using that they could use.

What specific policy options that are available to the Scottish Government does the Climate Change Committee feel are currently being underutilised or are poorly aligned with supporting the achievement of Scotland's decarbonisation targets?

Lord Deben: I have one general comment. Keith Bell referred to the lack of information in certain cases, and there is a lack of facts on which to base decisions. Secondly, there is a need to use much shorter-term measurements of outcomes. That is a practical thing. I think that Ms Lennon would agree that, in one's ordinary life, it is very easy to say, for example, "I'm going to lose weight over the next five years," but you have to start off with how you are going to lose weight over the next month, because otherwise it gets put off all the way. The problem is therefore the measurement of outcomes and the creation of the proper figuring that makes that possible. Those are two things that ought to be, and need to be, at the hands of the Government.

It would be a good idea to go back to Keith Bell, because he will have other points.

Professor Bell: The areas of policy that we highlighted particularly this year were transport, buildings and agriculture and land. Emily Nurse might be able to give some more detail on this in a second but, on the last of those, there is an opportunity following Scotland's exit from the European Union common agricultural policy to set new dimensions around agriculture policy.

However, it is not clear yet what is happening on that, so an opportunity is definitely not being realised.

There is also a relationship with diet, as our dietary choices have an impact on the use of land and emissions associated with agriculture. That is not a perfect link because, of course, agriculture is used for exports as well as serving the local market, and imports are used to meet our dietary needs. We are not talking about radical changes but, nonetheless, we are talking about changes that can have a positive impact on health and emissions.

The other issue related to land is peatland restoration. The Scottish Government has set a target that is not being met, and its target is less than the target that we recommended.

On buildings, we see the commitment in the programme for government to £1.8 billion of investment in the current session of Parliament, and I think that £330 million has been promised for the coming financial year. That is very welcome action.

10:15

As I mentioned, it remains to be seen what the impact will be, including the take-up and the development of the supply chain to deliver that. There is also positive action on information provision. Again, we will have to wait to see how effective that will be.

The other big area is transport, which I have just mentioned. The target to reduce car kilometres by 20 per cent is fantastic, but we are yet to see the means by which that is going to be achieved.

Those are the three big areas that I would highlight.

The Convener: We are going to come back to those three areas in some detail, so you can rest assured that they will be raised in further questioning. You will not be surprised to hear that.

Emily Nurse: I was going to give a bit more detail on those areas, but I will hold off from doing that.

I make the more general comment that, in quite a few cases, the proposed decarbonisation of sectors—particularly in relation to buildings, transport and greenhouse gas removal—is much faster than our recommended pathways. There are very ambitious milestones, such as the 20 per cent reduction in car kilometres, that go so much further than our most ambitious scenarios. We do not have a policy package that would make those work. In order to make scenarios work, we need to make sure that everything is considered, such as

the supply chain build-up, the skills build-up, the scrapping of old technologies and so on.

In some cases, we do not necessarily have a set of policies that we can suggest. The targets go beyond what we have had and they are very challenging. I will leave my detailed examples until we discuss those sectors.

Monica Lennon: Thank you. That is helpful. As the convener explained, we will go into those subject areas.

Lord Deben: Can I make that point even more strongly? The Scottish Government has been congratulated, as the Parliament has, on committing itself to tougher targets even than those that we proposed. The problem is that, unless there is a clear movement towards those targets, they will be without meaning. If all that you have is a target and you do not have any proof, so to speak, that you are moving towards it, it does not have meaning.

Our problem is that, because the target is beyond what we proposed, it is quite difficult for us to comment if there is really no programme to reach it. There is a kind of hiatus that needs to be filled. There needs to be a very clear programme that states step by step how Scotland is going to achieve the targets that it has put forward and supported, which stretch beyond what we proposed.

Monica Lennon: I think that we want to explore today how we can get away from what has been described as magical thinking and get meaningful targets that people believe can be achieved. As the convener explained, we will come back to transport, buildings, and land and agriculture.

Mark Ruskell asked about the budget. What more could be done in that regard to support emission reduction goals? I am thinking about options around non-domestic rates, land and buildings transaction tax and council tax. You may be aware of some reports that have been published in Scotland in recent months, including the Scottish Trades Union Congress report on options for increasing tax in Scotland to fund investment in public services. That includes proposals on a frequent flyer levy and a carbon emissions tax, which are also supported by the John Muir Trust.

We also have the Stop Climate Chaos Scotland report “Financing Climate Justice: Fiscal Measures for Climate Action in a time of crisis” and “A Vision for Scotland’s Railways”, which was published last year and which talks about a wealth tax to fund publicly owned public transport and green bonds that could be issued by the Scottish Government and local authorities.

Do panel members have views on the role that those reports and recommendations could play in helping to achieve what we want to achieve in Scotland?

Lord Deben: The role of the Climate Change Committee is to lay down how Governments should reach the ends that they have set. Our job is to set the targets. If you want to do more than is in the targets, we have to discuss how you are going to be able to do that. There will be a wide range of ways. There are some things that we think are individually important. For example, peatland restoration is a vital part of this, and the fact that Scotland is not achieving what it ought to be, when it has a significant problem in that area, is an example of where we could say that.

It is not up to us to say that you should raise money by using a wealth tax or that you should encourage actions by using local government taxes. It is for the Government to make those decisions, because that is the elected Government's role. Our job is to say that the targets will become fantasy rather than reality if you do not make any of those decisions. We are trying to get you to make the sort of political decisions that you need to make, so that we can see a route towards the ends to which you have committed yourself.

In addition to that, we have to say that there are some areas that you really have to look at. For example, we believe that we ought to be eating less but better meat. That should be very good for Scotland, because you produce some of the best meat in the world. We would much prefer people to eat rather less meat but to eat the good meat that comes from Scotland. That ought to be something that Scotland could major on, but there is no sign of that being part of the programme at the moment. That is the sort of thing that we look for: a practical statement of what you are going to do and how you are going to do it. We want to see a real association between local government, farmers, landowners and others to make that a reality.

Jackie Dunbar (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP): Good morning to our panel and thank you for coming.

Scotland needs to move to achieve our ambitious targets, but that could present a potential conflict with our commitment to a just transition. How do we ensure that the "just" aspect of the transition remains our top priority? I leave it up to you as to who is best to answer.

Lord Deben: I ought to start by saying that you are right that the just transition is crucial. You cannot divorce fairness—if I may use that word—from the climate change transition, for two reasons. The first reason is that the transition does

not work if you do not make it fair. Secondly, people will not have it if you do not make it fair.

I do not believe that there is a conflict; I believe that it is all part of the same thing. That is why one has had to say to the United Kingdom Government that fighting climate change means doing the very things that must be done to deal with the cost of living crisis, which is one of the areas in which unfairness is most obvious. I do not believe that there is a conflict between the two: you have to bring the two things together. That is part of the role of democratic Government and is part of the role of Government in working with local authorities.

One issue is that we do not believe that there is a sufficiently good partnership in Scotland between Government and local government to achieve a lot of those things. We can take the insulation of houses, which makes life easier for those in fuel poverty, as an example. That cannot be done centrally; it has to be done locally, by a local authority that knows the area and can make decisions for that section of the community. It seems very important to us to have a better partnership.

I can tell you not to get too upset about what is happening in Scotland because it is true about the rest of the United Kingdom except for Wales, which seems to have achieved that extremely well.

Perhaps Emily Nurse might like to make points about the congruence of justice and delivery.

Emily Nurse: I think that Marili Boufounou is going to come in on that.

Marili Boufounou: Just to add to what Lord Deben has just said, considering just transition in the course of decarbonisation is a statutory commitment in Scotland. It is part of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009. The Scottish Government has committed to providing sectoral plans on the decarbonisation of each economic sector that incorporate just transition considerations. That will start with an energy strategy that will also include a just transition plan for the energy sector, mainly considering the transition of skills in the workforce as required. Hopefully, it will include aspects of social fairness and what decarbonisation might mean for the sector.

Just transition poses big questions on skills and on transitioning the workforce. That is where the emphasis needs to be. Having the right skills and workforce in place to deliver the decarbonisation of each sector is one of the big hurdles to going beyond the pathway that Scotland has been following so far in order to deliver those very stretching targets. We will start to see some of the just transition considerations incorporated in policy going forward. The just transition commission,

which has been reinstated, is meant to be advising the Scottish Government on how it can incorporate just transition into the decarbonisation plans. There are some very big questions there. It is going to be difficult, particularly because Scotland needs to go faster. It is a matter of ensuring that, when policy is designed, it is designed well from the beginning and that those questions around fairness and transitioning the workforce are incorporated from the very beginning.

The Convener: The next section is on buildings, and the deputy convener, Fiona Hyslop, will begin the questions.

Fiona Hyslop (Linlithgow) (SNP): I want to focus on buildings. Why was it too early to say whether the Government was on track with its low-carbon heat ambitions and what evidence would you need as a committee to adequately assess progress? Lord Deben, please indicate who you would like to answer that question.

Lord Deben: I think that Emily Nurse should answer that question and then perhaps Keith Bell, and then me.

Emily Nurse: It was too early to say for a couple of reasons. First, we do not have the data. That is something that Keith Bell raised earlier. Particularly in the building sector, we do not have the data that we can use to monitor how fast heat pump roll-out is going and how quickly energy efficiency installations are happening. That makes it difficult to make a call. Secondly, it is an area where things need to happen really fast but they are just getting started. We recognise that. We need to see heat pump installation happening really fast in the next two years and we need the data to assess that.

In making a judgment on whether the policy is good enough, we do not have enough detail. Again, the issue relates to having to go faster than the rest of the UK and faster than our recommendations—much, much faster in this particular sector. The update to the climate change plan sets out a 70 per cent reduction in buildings emissions by 2030 compared to 2020 levels—that is, in 10 years. In our pathway, the reduction was much less than that at about 35 per cent, which is about half the Scottish target. The rate at which heat pumps need to come out is double what we recommended in our pathway, which is a stretching pathway and our most ambitious scenario. What we do not see is sufficient policy to show that it can go above and beyond, and the reason why it is too early to say is that we do not have the data to see how it is happening on the ground.

10:30

Professor Bell: A couple of weeks ago, a policy was announced for a grant of £7,500 for heat pump installation, and the budget available for that is something like £45 million in the coming year. That will support about 5,500 heat pumps, which is good, but it only scratches the surface of what the ambition says should be achieved, which is the annual installation rate ramping up to tens of thousands per year by the mid-2020s.

We are building on something that we talked about earlier. Ms Lennon talked about various reports giving different policy recommendations. A lot of those talked about raising public funds and public investment is an important part of all this, but so is private investment. The environment that is set for private investment is an important part of policy.

An important part of that environment is regulation, such as regulation of the setting of energy efficiency standards in buildings, particularly homes. There seems to be a bit of a gap there. In addition to that, it is not just about setting the standards but about monitoring that they are adhered to. Monitoring costs some public money but a lot of the achievement of standards, certainly in the private ownership sector, will come through private investment.

The point in the life of a building at which something should be enforced, such as when it is changing hands, for example, is important. As Emily Nurse said, the ambitions that have been set by the Scottish Government to deliver the 2030 emissions reduction target is extremely challenging, so things need to get going very soon.

Lord Deben: We have to see things getting going very soon indeed. I emphasise the suggestion that an important area is the point at which buildings change hands. That should be the moment at which one has the opportunity to improve the building's standards. It is also true that Scotland has not made standards to which new buildings should be built more quickly than the rest of the UK. We have been pressing that for the UK as a whole. I am sorry that Scotland has not taken a unilateral position and demanded higher standards for new buildings, particularly new domestic buildings.

It also seems to me that enforcement is crucial. We do not have any real evidence that the regulations that you do have in Scotland are being adequately enforced. If we have greater regulation, which is necessary, then regulation without proper enforcement is meaningless in the end. You need proper enforcement and that again comes back to the relationship between central and local government.

You need all that because the private sector demands it, too. If it is going to invest as we want it to invest, it wants to invest in circumstances in which it has certainty and where, in fact, in competitive terms, it does not find itself doing the right thing and being undercut by someone else who is not doing the right thing because the regulations are not enforced satisfactorily. It is a question of bringing all that together; that is always true, but it is particularly true if you have high standards.

Fiona Hyslop: It might be helpful to share with you the fact that, in the past few days, it looks as though the Scottish Government has indicated that it will introduce those standards for new buildings that you have talked about. I will leave that there.

I have another question. If the Scottish Government does not have powers to restrict the sale of replacement fossil fuel boilers, can it realistically expect to move faster than the rest of the United Kingdom on low-carbon heat? I understand that, recently, the UK Government started a consultation on a proposal to make fossil fuel boilers have to be hydrogen compatible after a certain date. Are we absolutely reliant on the UK Government doing that sort of thing, because it has the powers in that area?

Lord Deben: I am entirely on your side when it comes to ensuring that partnership works properly, and here is an area where the partnership has to do that. I think that the UK Government has been slow at dealing with the replacement boiler issue and improving the situation. I am not blaming the Scots; I am merely saying that, together, we have not done this effectively. Keith Bell has considered the issue carefully from the point of view of energy, so I invite him to answer.

The Convener: We will hear from Keith Bell, but then we will go to Emily Nurse, as she had her hand up, too.

Lord Deben: Did she? I cannot see people's hands. You should go to her first.

Emily Nurse: Ms Hyslop's point is a good one. It is another issue where, obviously, because of the 2030 target, things have to move more quickly in Scotland than in the rest of the UK. The issue of restricting the sale of gas boilers is a UK-wide one, and it is a real challenge, as we do not have a suggestion of a policy package in that regard.

The focus needs to be on encouraging take-up, and you can still do that even if the restriction on the sale of gas boilers has a different date. You must have policies to encourage the take-up of low-carbon heat, and those need to be in place now.

Professor Bell: The point about the market for boilers and appliances is important. To a certain

extent, it will be a UK-wide market. With regard to the regulations that are set on that, the situation is analogous to, for example, a ban on the sale of new combustion engine vehicles. If there is a commitment to that and the market has confidence that that will be a firm policy that will be delivered on, the market will respond to that signal and will start making the alternatives available. For vehicles, there is a global market, but the situation is slightly trickier with regard to heating appliances because, within Europe, it is the UK and the Netherlands that make the most use of gas boilers. However, on the positive side, across Europe, there is already a market for heat pumps, although many of them are air-to-air ones, rather than air-to-water ones, which is what a lot of our buildings would require.

There is a UK-wide dimension to the issue, but there is also a Scottish dimension because, as well as having new sorts of appliances—we can discuss whether having a gas boiler that is hydrogen ready is a good thing or a bad thing, and what hydrogen readiness really means—you also have to have alternatives available.

We have talked about heat pumps, and would recommend them in view of the low-carbon supply of energy to heat pumps via electricity and the coefficient of performance—that is, the fact that you get more or less three times the amount of heat from a heat pump than the energy that you put in. People have to have the opportunity to buy that system. That is a UK-wide market, but it also depends on the availability of local fitters who know what they are doing and can install the equipment, look at the building, understand the specifications that are needed, determine whether the radiators and so on are fit for purpose, fit enhanced insulation and so on. That kind of marketplace is more local and, in that regard, the Scottish Government and local authorities here can have a big impact with regard to the necessary training and upskilling in further education colleges and so on.

Jackie Dunbar: What aspects of building decarbonisation can the Scottish Government deliver on its own, and which ones would be more effectively delivered by jointly working with the rest of UK?

Lord Deben: The first point on that relates to Keith Bell's point about the market. The reason for having a UK policy is often to do with the fact that the market is the UK one and, if you want boilers to be as you want them, that will have to be done on the basis of the whole of the UK and it is much better that you do it together.

However, there are other things that the Scottish Government specifically can do, and those are largely in the area of regulation and standards.

The Scottish Government can deal with those things perfectly properly.

I have been saying for almost 10 years that one of the advantages of devolution ought to be that countries can say, “Frankly, we’re going to move faster than the United Kingdom,” for example on the subject of the standards of people’s new homes. In the United Kingdom as a whole, we have built 1.5 million homes that are unfit for the future because we changed the regulations. The Conservative Government at the time, in 2017, changed the commitment to net zero homes. That is 1.5 million homes that have to be retrofitted. I just do not want that to go on.

We are still waiting for the United Kingdom to set its future standards. There is no reason why Scotland could not have its own future standards, because the building is done locally and those standards could be met, although they also have to be enforced. One of the worries that I have is that the present standards are often not effectively enforced. That is why the relationship between the Scottish Government and local government is so important.

That is the area that I would concentrate on: things that Scotland could do for itself without the rest of the United Kingdom.

Professor Bell: I will mention another dimension. Having heat pumps in individual buildings is not the only option for the decarbonisation of heat. You can also have heat sources at scale, with larger heat sources where access to heat is via heat networks—in other words, district heating. Again, that is very much a local planning thing. Local authorities will be closely involved in it, but so will other parties. It works best in cities, where there is a density of heat demand and no need to have long heat networks. You do not have to go many metres to reach a lot of energy users.

As we have discussed many times, there are complications with how that gets going. The public sector has an important part to play in providing an anchor load. It can say, “Here’s a guarantee of a large user of heat—enough to get the financial commitment to a heat network over the line.” Once a network has been committed to and is being built, it becomes easier to get others involved. That is something that can be done in Scotland, particularly in cities.

The Convener: Keith, you have very neatly moved on to a subject that Mark Ruskell wants to ask about, so I will bring him in next. Liam Kerr then wants to ask a supplementary question, and I would like to ask a quick question after that.

Mark Ruskell: My question is about whether local heat and energy efficiency strategies are the right approach. I heard Keith Bell’s response about

conversion, retrofitting and the numbers that we can get through the current system. Could LHEES provide a step change with, maybe, a move towards more area-based schemes that involve whole communities or streets being retrofitted and invested in? Will that approach provide the right incentive for private sector investment?

It feels as if we are struggling to find the step change here. Some work is happening with LHEES, but does it fill you with hope, or is there still some way to go?

Professor Bell: It is a bit of both. The outline of the approach is right: to look locally at the right solution for a particular place, with access to different heat sources, the right ways of moving the energy around and so on. At the same time, however, you are right to say that there is still a long way to go. It is a challenge to turn an outline of a strategy into delivery. We are coming back to that again and again in this session.

The commercial and regulatory environment does not make it easy. I am not quite sure what the best approach is to do something about that. A local authority, having commissioned some analysis, can outline what it believes. However, we have talked about the fact that different local authorities have different capacities to do that. Some are doing it very well and engaging with it strongly, while others find it difficult because of the resources that they have or the lack of expertise locally. That is a whole other dimension.

10:45

If we assume that the local authority does have a strategy, how is that implemented? That depends on a lot of private investment, especially at the scale of something like a heat network. As you say, it stands to reason that there could be cost efficiencies from going street to street. What are the mechanisms by which a contract on that can be let? How does that interact with the energy supply contracts that individual households have with their gas and electricity suppliers? Some of those suppliers are now offering some of those services themselves—thank goodness there is finally some innovation. I look forward to seeing how that plays out, but that might work against a street by street approach.

The dimension of choice is often overlooked. The UK Parliament set up some climate assemblies, which finished their work at the start of the pandemic, during the first half of 2020. A big message that came out of those and struck me quite strongly was that assembly members, who were drawn from all sectors of society, were persuaded of the rightness of the energy transition and of reducing emissions in general, despite the short-term cost of capital assets.

However, the assemblies said that they wanted a choice. They wanted to be able to decide for themselves which solutions are used. There is a tension between what an individual householder might want, the most cost-effective solution for an area and the way that is delivered. I am sorry that that does not sound very positive, because it does not suggest any answers. The positive bit is the willingness to engage.

This all points back to the local authority, which is the secret sauce. That authority has a local democratic mandate because people have expressed a choice through their vote. If the local authority proposition for how to deal with heat decarbonisation is clearly communicated to voters in the area, there should be some legitimacy when they come to implement that policy.

Mark Ruskell: That is the local level. Why is the CCC so resistant to boiler scrappage schemes and scrappage schemes in general? The report really challenges Government, but I wonder why some policy options seem to be off the table. Emily Nurse said earlier that there was some scepticism about scrappage.

Emily Nurse: I said that scrappage needs to be considered. Going much faster with boiler scrappage means that you have to consider the embodied emissions and take those into account to make sure that it is practical. We would not rule scrappage out, but it needs to be part of the plan. We need to acknowledge how much scrappage there would be and whether, considering the embodied emissions, that is something that we want to do. Given the fast roll-out of new technology, we need to understand what that means for scrappage.

The Convener: Liam Kerr has a supplementary question.

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): Lord Deben, you note in your report that

“It is currently very difficult to monitor progress against the necessary measures for decarbonising the buildings sector due to a lack of adequate and up-to-date data.”

Would you have expected data collection mechanisms to be in place already? In your experience, which mechanisms could or should be introduced to monitor and support delivery?

Lord Deben: I am not one for expectations, Mr Kerr, but I will try to answer.

If you are going to have high expectations and tough targets, you must start by knowing how you can tell that you are reaching those. What worries me about Scotland’s tough targets is that no one seems to have understood that you cannot get there unless you can measure how you get there. We would have expected those measurements at

least have been introduced, if not actually to be in existence.

I refer to even simple measurements such as updating those for measuring the energy use in buildings. There are great faults in what we have at the moment. That is one area that we might have expected to be addressed. We might also have expected a much tougher view to be taken on new buildings—both new measures in regulation and new measures to measure those.

In other words, there was a series of things we might have expected that were inevitably necessary if you have high standards. The Scottish Parliament and Government fixed those standards and it seems to us that they lacked the ability to measure them. If you cannot measure it, you do not do it. Not only do you not do it, you do not know whether you have done it or have failed to do it. All that we can say is that there is no evidence that it has been done or is being done.

Liam Kerr: I have a further question on the heat in buildings strategy. We heard that the Scottish Government is putting £1.8 billion towards that over, I think, five years. We also know that the cost of achieving the heat in buildings strategy is £33 billion. That figure is now dated. I asked a parliamentary question about what it is now with inflation and answer came there none.

Is £1.8 billion sufficient? Do you get any sense of whether there is a concrete plan that will leverage £33 billion-plus from that £1.8 billion contribution?

Lord Deben: In a sense, you have answered the question yourself. You can deliver the strategy in two ways or by a mixture of the two. One is that the Government pays for it. The other is that the Government creates a system whereby the very significant sums that are available in the private sector are drawn into doing it.

Our concern is that it is difficult to see a programme on either front. Clearly, the sum is not sufficient to deliver of itself. On the other hand, we do not see a detailed mechanism whereby the Government says that, if it achieves the strategy in a particular way, it will draw in certain sums to achieve a particular end elsewhere. That is what we are looking for.

To be frank, we are looking for what you would expect in a business. If a business said to its shareholders that it was going to do X, Y and Z, the shareholders would perfectly properly say, “We want to see the programme, Mr Chairman, as to how you are going to do that.” That is what we are asking for.

The Convener: I tried hard to restrain myself and could not. I want to talk briefly about energy performance certificates. When EPCs were

introduced, no one thought that they were a good idea or a good measure of energy efficiency. In fact, you could almost replace the lights in a property with LED lights and, as a result, get a higher rating than putting in double-glazed windows would give you.

Are EPCs the way forward, or do we need to come up with a clever plan rather than just saying that, for example, if a house does not achieve EPC rating C, it is not fit for occupancy? I do not know who wants to answer that. You could just satisfy me by saying that EPCs are not great and we need a better system, but I do not want to put words into your mouths.

Lord Deben: I will say it: they are not great and we need a better system. Life is about using what you have to start with and then, if it is not right, changing it. I am one of those who think that that is exactly what we should do about EPCs.

Given that our biggest problem is that we do not have measurements, to throw out what measurements we have, even if they are not competent ones, is not the best way forward. You need to change them and bring them up to date. The Scottish Government could do that and set an example for the rest of the United Kingdom. What I want you to do is to give me opportunities to be able to say to the United Kingdom Government, "For goodness' sake, if Scotland can do it, why can't you?" That is a really important and valuable thing that you could do for us.

The Convener: I cannot help myself when I am on a roll. Keith Bell, I see that you nodded. Do you just want to agree?

Professor Bell: Yes, I agree. EPCs are not good and they never have been good. As Lord Deben says, they are what we have and it is better to have something to drive things in a positive direction than to do nothing at all. However, work to replace them with something better is overdue.

The Convener: I will leave it there and go to the next question.

Monica Lennon: I will pick up on transport. You will be aware that, pre-pandemic, in Scotland our annual car kilometres were increasing. We have a target of 20 per cent reduction in car demand, but the Climate Change Committee is very clear that there needs to be a paradigm shift if we are to achieve that. I note that in the recommendations in your report you link the target with Scottish Government documents on the national planning framework and the strategic transport projects review. You are clearly looking for more alignment with other strategies and programmes.

What policies does the Climate Change Committee think that the Scottish Government needs to use to support alternatives to car use and

to discourage car use? We still have a long way to go to get that modal shift to sustainable public transport and active travel. I know that you do not want to make policy recommendations to the Government, but it feels as though we are lacking in courage, both in the Government and in Parliament, to make some of those tough decisions. It will not all be popular. If you give us a steer on some of the carrots and sticks that could be considered, that would be helpful.

Lord Deben: Keith Bell will not like me for saying this, but he is going to answer that question.

I will give a single example, which I think is worth while. As you well know Ms Lennon, the problem with transport is that the moment we try to touch any of it, there is always a group of people for whom it is particularly damaging or difficult. I do not blame the Government for being reticent in trying to get it right because it is extremely difficult. However, given that the Scottish Government has been very strong in its policy aims, it has to grab the issue.

There is a series of things that could be done. I will pass over to Keith Bell to outline those things. I do not want anyone to misunderstand. We are not saying that it is an easy area—it is a very difficult area, but it is a crucial one. We have to do it. Climate change will not wait while we find some miraculous answer.

Professor Bell: You used some key words in your question, such as "courage". You are right that both the Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament need to resolve some of the tensions that Lord Deben alluded to, where different interest groups will oppose the particular policies that you try to implement.

As we have said before, the ambition to reduce car kilometres by 20 per cent is great. Previous Scottish Government reports have talked about a 20-minute neighbourhood, which is a fantastic idea. However, we are waiting to see how that will be achieved.

You were right to suggest in your question that it has to be a mixture of carrots and sticks. The carrot is to encourage people on to public transport—that modal shift that you mentioned is key. There are some things that sound positive in that respect, such as free bus travel for people aged 21 and under. Hopefully, that will encourage young people not just to use buses but to get into the habit of using buses so that they continue to use them. However, that depends on the bus service being really good, reliable and frequent.

There is great variation in the quality of bus services, not just across rural areas but in cities. I live in Glasgow and I try to use the bus from time to time, but it is a bit of a lottery whether the bus

will turn up. There are signs at the bus stop that one would imagine say where the bus is and how long it will take, but they just repeat the timetable—or so it seems—rather than actively monitoring the buses. I am told that, if you have an app on your phone, that may work, but things like this are perfectly achievable and other cities manage to do them. Why can we not manage to do it in Glasgow? We need to build up confidence in the public transport system.

11:00

Monica Lennon: Can we stick with buses? You have made me think about our local situation in Hamilton, where the express bus service into the centre of Glasgow, which was really popular with students going to university or college, for example, was taken away during the pandemic and we do not have it back yet. In debates on this topic in the chamber, colleagues have talked about public transport deserts in their communities, and it can be very challenging in rural areas. It is great that more people have access to free bus passes, but if they do not have services, that is pretty useless.

Given the target to reduce car kilometres by 20 per cent by the end of the decade, do we need to see more action in that space, with bus services and integrated public transport that actually work for people's real lives and timetables, whether they involve university, education, work, hospital appointments, socialising, shopping or whatever? A lot of people say that it is frustrating and difficult to get around, which is why they cannot give up using a private car.

What more could be done to resource public transport? The report from your committee talks about continuing the Covid-19 pandemic support for operators and local transport authorities. What is missing in that space, Professor Bell?

Professor Bell: This gets into detail that I am not familiar with, but there is a question about the effectiveness of public policy and the transport system. Public support for investing to provide support for buses that might not on their own be commercially viable and getting oases into some of those deserts will be a big part of it.

The co-ordination of public transport services is also important. We need the ability to use tickets across different means of transport. Again, other cities manage to have that. I am not sure why we do not manage it in parts of Scotland. I guess that it is to do with contractual arrangements with the private service providers—in particular, the bus providers.

It may well be that UK-wide legislation is involved. You will have heard the mayor of Manchester talk a lot about local authorities' ability

to take back control—where have we heard that phrase before?—of public transport. It may well be that that is relevant in parts of Scotland as well.

Also, there have to be links across different areas of policy. Transport policy must not be seen in isolation. It must be seen in the context of emissions reduction but also of spatial planning and access to public services. To what extent is the planning permission that is given for housing developments linked to access to amenities such as shops, general practice surgeries and dentists? All of that has to be brought together.

It is not easy, but it may depend on courage—to use that word again—at the local authority level to insist on particular services being provided in development plans before they will be approved. To what extent does it depend on rules being set at the Scottish Government level that then have to be implemented locally? That takes me into policy detail that I am not familiar with, but it appears to me that there are levers that can be pulled, particularly on the co-ordination of policy.

The Convener: Jackie Dunbar has a couple of questions on the subject, or at least one.

Jackie Dunbar: I have just the one, convener. It is about low-emission vehicles rather than public transport. What can the Scottish Government do within the powers that it has to increase the market share of low-emission vehicles in Scotland, be they electric vehicles or hydrogen vehicles?

Lord Deben: Keith Bell would know about that, but may I just jog back a second? If you are dealing with any of these things, particularly transport, we would emphasise the importance of planning, and the rules about planning. It goes back to a point that Keith Bell made about transport. If you want quarter-of-an-hour living spaces, where you can get to things in a quarter of an hour, you need a planning system that ensures that that happens. Again, that is hugely important.

The Convener: You almost played a magical tune to Monica Lennon, because one of her areas of expertise is planning. Thank you for that.

Professor Bell: I am sure that we are glad to be of service.

The good news is that low-emission vehicles, especially electric vehicles, are starting to prove popular. The sales figures for the past couple of years look very positive for low-emission vehicles relative to combustion engine vehicles. It is still a challenge, because they are very expensive—the up-front cost is high.

A big part of the issue of uptake is reputation. If you happen to know someone who has got a low-emission vehicle, and they like it and find it a pleasure to drive, that is all great. Word gets around, and you are encouraged to go for it

yourself. However, negative word can get around, too. A particular one at the moment is about the reliability of charging infrastructure. Relative to other parts of the UK, Scotland does not do too badly for the number of publicly accessible chargers, but there seem to be very mixed messages about how good they are. When you turn up, is the charger going to be in a working state? Have you got the right means to pay for it? Again, we are slightly better in Scotland than in other parts of the UK, but we are not consistently good. That good reputation has to be spread, and you have to take action to address any kind of bad reputation.

I have not had a chance to look into this. However, I think that a recent BBC documentary looked at the reliability of public chargers. The BBC investigation revealed some opinions that were very different from the data from Transport Scotland. I am sure that digging into where those differences have come from is already on the committee's agenda.

Emily Nurse: Keith Bell has already made some of the points that I was going to make. In general, this area is more positive than some others, in particular with the Scottish Government offering grants for installing home chargers and interest-free loans that extend to second-hand vehicles. That is all very positive stuff. Some of the concerns are to do with things such as making sure that this comes out to the full consumer base, for example by addressing price disparity with home and public charging points and so on.

I want to make the point again that the challenge here, despite good progress, is that things really need to go faster than UK wide. What we are seeing is that electric vehicle sales are slightly behind UK wide. Again, there is a need to go faster than our most stretching pathway. That is always the challenge, even though progress is generally quite good here.

The Convener: Mark Ruskell has a supplementary question.

Mark Ruskell: Just to refocus on delivery programmes, the second strategic transport projects review has just been launched in Scotland. I would be interested in your views on that. The next stage of that process is the prioritisation of a delivery plan. There are some big ideas in there, such as mass transit schemes in the cities. Are there things in STPR2 that you would question, or is it all in line with the 75 per cent target and the 2040 target? I am not sure who would like to take that.

The Convener: If we start with Lord Deben, he can allocate it.

Lord Deben: First, in general, yes, we will go along with STPR2. Without being too critical,

again, the real trouble—as you well know, Mr Ruskell—is in the detail. If we are not careful, what we have got is yet another layer of what needs to be done—another layer of generalities.

However, I still want, all the time, to push down to what actually has to be done, who is going to do it, who is going to provide the resources for it, how it is going to work out on the ground and, above all, how to measure how successful it has been. I do not think that the final element has played enough of a part in what has so far been put forward. I pass to Keith Bell.

The Convener: Briefly, please.

Professor Bell: I have very little to add, actually. I will just reinforce the same points: it is fantastic to have set out some bold ambitions and schemes, but the reality of taking them forward must be addressed. As I mentioned, the implementation dimension is a critical part of it, setting out what that will look like and how it will be funded, with credible projections of what impact it will have.

Mark Ruskell: Thank you both for those comments.

I will move on to aviation. The Scottish Government has limited powers over aviation, but it does, or will, have some powers over passenger duty and it has powers over planning. How should the Government be tackling aviation right now, particularly in the light of a forthcoming aviation strategy?

Lord Deben: I will go to Keith Bell, but I will first make a general point. Any aviation policy is bedevilled by the fact that immediately you say anything—I say this in support of all Governments—a great howl comes out that you are stopping people's holidays or preventing people from doing the things that they want to do, whereas that is not what you need to do or should be doing.

Obviously, there are two things that are crucial. One is about ensuring that using an aeroplane is less necessary, and that is not entirely in the hands of the Scottish Government. However, the Scottish Government ought to be pressing the UK Government for recognition that people will use alternatives if there are alternatives and consideration of what those alternatives are. However, I would hate to get on to the subject of ferries, because that seems to be probably not a good place to go. There is a very special need for aviation in Scotland, but that should not cover up the areas in which you can replace aviation by other mechanisms. It is a question of being accurate, precise and detailed about it.

The second thing is that conditions around aviation are an area in which you can make big

differences. I am talking about the land-based emissions around airports and suchlike; you can really make a huge difference in the amount of emissions if you take that seriously, particularly in an enclosed area where, for example, fuel cell-driven machinery is available. I want people to think about aviation in the wider sense—about the services that are provided—and how to reduce its impact, particularly in areas in which you cannot reduce, in the present technological situation, the need for the use of the aeroplane itself.

Professor Bell: Lord Deben has made pretty much all the points that I would have made. The point about the land-based emissions at airports is a really good one. Work on that is happening; I have some colleagues at the University of Strathclyde who are involved in some work that relates to Glasgow airport, for example.

The issue that I re-emphasise is the demand side. Reducing the demand for aviation does not mean preventing people going on one or two short-haul flights a year for holidays and so on; rather, frequent fliers are the obvious area of interest. Do they have to make so many flights? Can they make journeys by alternative means? The alternative means have to be built up and given confidence in, which, as Lord Deben says, links back to other forms of transport. In respect of trips up and down to England, the rail system has to be up to scratch.

Mark Ruskell: What do you think about the French Government's approach to banning certain domestic flights within 2.5 hours' travel where there is a rail alternative? That came out of the French citizens assembly and the Government has now taken it on and is delivering. It is a different context, however.

11:15

Lord Deben: That is absolutely true and I am entirely in favour of it. However, it means that you have to provide a proper alternative. The French have been better than us over many years in providing the rail alternative. We have to catch up if we are going to do that properly.

As far as Scotland is concerned, I do not think that that would make a huge difference because, very often, we are talking about flights for which there is no alternative. The Climate Change Committee always uses the train and we do not come up to Scotland on the aeroplane. We take that as part of the job that we have to do—it means that the trains have to be running—and as part of the role that we think we ought to play.

We have not mentioned that many journeys can be avoided by doing what we are doing now. I would much prefer to be with you in the committee, because I have not been able to be

with you during the past year. However, we all know that in business, for every four meetings, there is no reason why three of them cannot be held remotely, like this one. Of course, people have to get together from time to time, but I find in my businesses that we have reduced spending on air flights and suchlike simply by using remote meetings as a natural mechanism.

Those pressures should be added to by Government advice and help. That is an area where we can reduce the need for flights. You cannot reduce the need if you want to go on holiday or if you have got to keep an eye on a particular factory, but you can do three of the meetings about the factory without going there, and go there for the fourth one. That is the kind of choice that can be made about the way in which we treat and talk about travel and the way in which the Government behaves, too. Governments have to be much better at using the extremely good video systems that we now have.

The Convener: I am conscious of the time and, although I do not want to limit anyone's contributions, I know that if I do not allow other committee members to ask their questions, I will not have a good Christmas. I will bring in Emily Nurse and then I will go to Liam Kerr with the next questions.

Emily Nurse: I accept the challenge to be brief. Given the 2030 target, we have to do everything in every single sector. There is a big gap. In most cases, the Scottish Government's ambition goes further than ours and we worry about the delivery, but aviation and peatland restoration are the two examples where the ambition is lower. We think that more ambition is needed in those areas in order to meet the target, given the big gap that we see.

Liam Kerr: I will turn to agriculture and land use. The climate change plan update aims to reduce emissions from agriculture by around 28 per cent between 2020 and 2030. The Climate Change Committee says that it is unclear how that can be achieved. We also note that the recent agricultural bill consultation appeared to lack detail. If we assume that new policies will not be in place until 2024 and that new practices, particularly in that sector, will take time to implement, is it too late to achieve the target?

Lord Deben: I would be very unhappy to say that it is ever too late. Certainly, it would have been easier if we had started rather earlier—let us put it that way.

We have to face the fact that we cannot meet the target of net zero by 2050—leaving aside the specialist targets for Scotland—unless we have a land use policy that deals with it. You have to take the whole agricultural community into your

confidence in that and, if you want to do that, there are three specific necessities.

First, you have to be clear what you want to do and what mechanisms you are going to use. People have to have confidence because—I declare an interest as a small farmer—when we make choices about what we plant and how we do it, we need to know the context in which we make those choices. Farming in Scotland does not know that, because there is not enough clarity. Clarity is crucial.

The second thing is that partnership is absolutely important because the Government does not do the planting and the husbandry. People do that and they must feel that there is a proper relationship. In the move from the common agricultural policy to our new system—which is about the only advantage that I can think of from leaving the European Union, but I will not get into that—we should use partnership, but we are not using it effectively enough. That leaves people in the lurch.

The third thing that seems necessary to me is to be absolutely frank about what you are trying to do. We need to accept that agriculture produces a huge part of our emissions and that we must reduce that. We also have to accept that agriculture has an opportunity to help to reduce emissions through sequestration. We must find ways of helping agriculture to do both those things, which means two simple things: certainty and measurement. The biggest issue is measurement because, even if we had certainty, we would not have a means of measuring how successful our policies were.

Liam Kerr: I will stay with taking people and industry along on the journey.

Professor Bell talked earlier of diet changes, which echoes the COP15 biodiversity conference—protecting nature is about protecting food. The Climate Change Committee makes recommendations on diet change and encourages a move away from meat and poultry of 20 per cent by 2030. NFU Scotland would counter that that could have a negative impact not only on farmers and the economy but, crucially, on food security as well as increasing reliance on imports.

Lord Deben, have you assessed the environmental cost of greater reliance on imported food over locally sourced food? Is there a danger that, in trying to achieve its targets, the Government perhaps unwittingly sacrifices food security, livelihoods and, potentially—given import emissions—the environment?

Lord Deben: No, not if it does the policy properly. To be frank, the arguments are not well founded. Let us go through them.

First, on imports, of course you do not wish to replace home-produced product with imported product. If you are not going to do that, you must not have agreements with other countries that do not insist on the same standards. That is why the Australian and New Zealand agreements are entirely unacceptable. Neither of them properly made sure that farmers would not have unfair competition because farmers there were not meeting the same standards. The Scottish Government has every right to say to the British Government that that was a mistake and should not be continued.

Secondly, we are saying that we should eat less meat but better meat. British meat has the lowest carbon footprint of any meat in the world. Therefore, we are looking for people to buy rather less but better meat that is produced at home. The reality is that we are all eating too much. Let alone meat, we all know that our actual diet means that we are an obese nation. We are the most obese nation in Europe, which is not very acceptable. Only the Americans and, I think, the Mexicans beat us. That is not a part of the range that we ought to be in.

We are talking about a very small change. The health people tell us that we should be eating much less meat. That is not something that I agree with, and I do not think that anybody could accuse me of being anything other than a carnivore. However, it seems to me that the proposed change is such a simple mechanism. When I look at the attitude of farmers in some parts of the country, I find that they are not seeing it for what it is, which is a chance to do better.

You do not have many feedlots in Scotland. You have well-produced meat. You should be selling the well-produced meat from home production as the answer to the issue, and that is what we should all be doing.

We need to recognise that we are eating too much, that we could change our diet without noticing it much and that people are already doing that. The reason why I am particularly keen for farmers to be on board is that the danger to them is not that people will object to what we are talking about but that people will increasingly say that a plant-based diet is the answer to our problems. That is not true. The truth is that we need farmers to have animals. We need to have mixed farming and we need to support it. We just need to eat less and better.

The Convener: We are up against the time, so we need to move on.

Fiona Hyslop: I want to focus on peatland restoration. Your report talks about the learning that we now have on historical emissions, which need adjustment for the current targets, but you

also indicate that global warming will have an impact on what might happen with peatland emissions in future.

Bearing in mind that the Scottish Government is already investing £50 million a year as part of a £250 million package, which is a substantial amount, what needs to be done to dial up the action on peatland restoration in order to make an impact?

Emily Nurse: There are a couple of issues. One is that the targets are not ambitious enough and the other is that they are not being hit. Things are improving. There was an increase in the most recent year that has been reported and the figures are expected to go up again, but we are obviously far from the target. Damaged peatlands are an important source of emissions, but there is a gap of 7 or 8 megatonnes between what we think is the pathway and the 2030 target, and the lower peat ambition in the Scottish plans means that there will be an extra 1 megatonne of emissions. We believe that it is important to scale up both the ambition and delivery.

What needs to happen? We have highlighted that skills and contractor availability are issues. There are also some issues with financing and people being sure about the options that are available to them, and clarity is needed on that. Those barriers need to be addressed. However, the truth is that I do not think that we are 100 per cent sure why things are quite so far behind in relation to the Scottish Government's targets.

I do not know whether anyone wants to add to that.

The Convener: If anyone does, they will need to be brief, I am afraid.

Lord Deben: Let us move on, then.

Fiona Hyslop: Do you want me to move to my next area, convener?

The Convener: No. I am keen to bring in Mark Ruskell, who has a question on agriculture.

Mark Ruskell: It is just a brief question on the back of Liam Kerr's point about diet change. Practically, what should Governments be delivering in that regard? Is it about changing the way in which public canteens and kitchens offer choice? Is it about food labelling? What are the tools? Is it all about market demand, given your comment that people are generally moving towards eating less meat anyway?

11:30

Lord Deben: Well, I think that it is a mixture of all those things. Governments can set an example by the way in which they procure. Procurement is hugely important and it would give the farmers

much greater confidence if they felt that the procurement system backed all this up.

It is about public knowledge. When we took the Climate Change Committee around the whole United Kingdom, its members were struck the most by the degree to which good-hearted people who wanted to do the right thing did not know what they should be doing. Unfortunately, there are extremists who want to use this as a means of promoting their own agenda, not that of climate change, and we need to get through that to a sensible, moderate way of telling people about the sort of choices that they can make, such as giving a bit more help for teaching boys and girls cooking and suchlike in schools, and so on.

As usual, as one gets older, one discovers that it is usually not either/or but both/and, and it is a question of doing all those things in a way that means that people begin to do them naturally. They might have meat once a day but not twice a day. They might have it three times a week and they pay a bit extra for it because they know that it is good, home produced and better for them and for the climate.

Monica Lennon: Professor Bell might be best placed to answer my question about the forthcoming circular economy bill. I know that your recommendations covered that. What could the committee expect to see in a Scottish Government bill on the circular economy?

Professor Bell: There will be enormous challenges in achieving a circular economy. It will depend on a lot of choices being made by consumers at all scales—not just individuals, but businesses and public organisations as consumers of stuff. How do we encourage consumers to make choices that encourage reuse and minimise waste? That has to mean a range of things. As Lord Deben said in answer to the previous question, all sorts of policies will have to do "both this and that". The public sector can take an important lead in that. How you encourage everything outside the public sector to move goes back to information and awareness-raising. It seems to me that there will have to be a mixture of policies. I do not know whether any of my colleagues want to come in—

Monica Lennon: I am sorry to interrupt, but you mentioned the public sector. What specifically could the public sector do in this space? The report from Circularity Scotland says that Scotland's economy is only 1.3 per cent circular. You talked about people recycling more, but we also need to consume less in the first place. What levers could the public sector use? Is it about procurement or something else?

Professor Bell: Yes—it is about procurement but, as we know, it is important first that there is

reuse before recycling. We need to be able to repair appliances and products wherever possible. Procurement choices have to lean towards things that are repairable or that have a longer life, and they must, to some extent, include some idea of the embodied emissions in the product or service that is being bought. In a standard accounting framework, those kinds of benefits might be heavily discounted because they are some way into the future, but they will happen, so we should not discount them too heavily in the financial analysis of actions. The initial costs of such products might seem to be expensive, but they ought to be. Something that is more expensive now will not be more expensive in the long term, but will potentially be cheaper. We have to encourage people to use our resources to move towards things that are more efficient and that reduce the impact in terms of what we take out of the planet.

Fiona Hyslop: The committee has taken a keen interest in carbon capture and storage, on which we had a short inquiry earlier this year. Can you comment on the impact that the Scottish Cluster, as part of future carbon capture and storage, might have on the abatement figure? We know that it was not part of track 1, but there is still a strong emphasis in Scotland on the need for CCS, not only for our abatement measures but for those of the rest of the UK. What is your message for the UK and Scottish Governments about the importance of CCS in delivering our climate change targets?

Lord Deben: We need carbon capture and storage. We have particular advantages in the United Kingdom as a whole that enable us to do that more effectively than other countries might; we can store carbon more effectively than some.

Scotland was a major competitor for one of the clusters. The two Governments must come to terms with the fact that Scotland's delivering what it wants to deliver will depend on the significant role that can be played by removing carbon. That is something that is clear in your budget. Our message for both Governments is that carbon capture and storage is an essential part of reaching net zero.

CCS is clearly an important part of the Scottish Government's plans. The more defined the Scottish Government's plans are in some areas, the more responsibility it has for reminding the United Kingdom Government that it cannot do what it wants without the help of the United Kingdom in enabling carbon capture and storage.

There are two things. The Scottish argument will be stronger if Scotland is clear about its means of dealing with what it can control; however, at the same time, Scotland has a perfect right to say that if it is going to contribute to what the United

Kingdom is doing, it needs the opportunity to do so—which it does not have at the moment.

Fiona Hyslop: What is the timescale for that to be effective in delivering on the targets? I understand that, if there is to be a big impact, the UK Government would have to move very soon to approve accelerating Scotland from the reserve list to track 2.

Lord Deben: I know that to be true. Keith Bell might have an additional point to make.

Professor Bell: I am not privy to information about exactly how the UK Government's consideration of track 2 is going. My understanding is the same as yours, which is that things need to move soon so that the development that has been proposed by Scotland can go ahead. The proposal must be sufficiently robust to encourage investment of UK taxpayers' money. If it is sufficiently robust, we want engagement by the UK Government sooner rather than later.

Emily Nurse: You asked specifically about abatement. We estimate, based on the current pipeline of projects, about 1 megatonne of greenhouse gas removal. That is based on projects up to 2030, and is quite a lot less than the 3.8 megatonnes estimate in the climate change plan update. The estimate is based on current projects, which means that things will have to move fast even to get to that level.

Mark Ruskell: I will move beyond that to look at wider industrial decarbonisation that may or may not feed into the Acorn project. What progress could the Scottish Government make by working with industry between now and 2030? Which options are most deliverable within that timescale?

Yesterday, I released a report that I commissioned on decarbonisation options for Mossmorran. I think that it is the first report on what a site-specific transition might look like for that plant. What are your thoughts on wider industrial decarbonisation, and what big step changes can we make?

Lord Deben: First, I am absolutely sure that localised work of the sort that you have just mentioned is crucial. In order to make decarbonisation work, outcomes must be measured; it is necessary to say what the result could be and to check that it has been delivered. That is an important part of what needs to be done.

The Government can certainly concentrate on where action can be taken and measured. That is one of the major ways forward.

Perhaps Emily Nurse and Keith Bell would like to comment on that.

Emily Nurse: I have no comments on this issue.

Professor Bell: You are absolutely right to highlight the importance of specific sites. We know that, in Scotland, industrial greenhouse gas emissions come predominantly from a small number of large sites. I admit that I am not close to the subject, but—although this might not be fair—in discussion with Scottish Government officials I have detected defensiveness or nervousness about those sites. However, we have to engage with those questions if we are to make progress in the sector as a whole.

The other point to make is that those large sites are not the only sources of industrial emissions. Production and manufacturing are quite dispersed, which presents a large challenge because it adds up to a significant amount, even if each individual site does not produce a great amount of emissions. We should not overlook the importance of emissions reductions in smaller parts of manufacturing and industry.

The Convener: We have come to the end of questions. I am going to have a nice Christmas, because I managed to allow all committee members to ask what they wanted to ask.

I thank our witnesses for taking part and sharing their expertise. On behalf of the committee, I extend a special thanks to Lord Deben for his input in the past and today. It is clear that you have a huge depth of knowledge, and you choreographed your team beautifully to ensure that we were able to draw on their expertise.

I think that I am not breaking any confidences if I say that you are standing down next year, so it might be that we will not get to see you in person—especially because you believe that such appearances do not contribute to our net zero ambitions. However, we would have liked to have seen you in person to benefit from your experience. Nevertheless, I give you special thanks on behalf of the committee, and our predecessor committee, for your input and the hard work that you have put in. I thank you and your team. I hope that we have an opportunity to catch up with you next year, before you stand down.

Lord Deben: Thank you. I have done my legally allowable 10 years, and my time has been extended until the end of June, so I have no doubt that we will find an opportunity to speak again. I do not wish to leave the job before I have another visit to Scotland; I appreciate such visits. I want a year—next year—when I can congratulate you and use your example as a means of getting other people to do more than they are doing at the moment.

Thank you very much for your kindness and for your comments about my team. I, too, thank them—in particular, for how they have carried on in the absence of Chris Stark, who we had, even earlier this morning, hoped to have with us.

The Convener: Thank you. I hope that you and your team have a happy Christmas and that we get to see you next year.

Subordinate Legislation

Public Service Vehicles (Registration of Local Services) (Provision of Service Information) (Scotland) Regulations 2022 (SSI 2022/358)

11:44

The Convener: The next item on our agenda is consideration of an instrument that has been laid under negative procedure, which means that its provisions will come into force unless Parliament agrees to a motion to annul the instrument. No motion to annul has been lodged.

As members have no comments, I invite the committee to agree that it does not wish to make any recommendations on the instrument. Are we agreed?

Members *indicated agreement.*

The Convener: That concludes the public part of our meeting.

11:46

Meeting continued in private until 12:20.

This is the final edition of the *Official Report* of this meeting. It is part of the Scottish Parliament *Official Report* archive and has been sent for legal deposit.

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