



OFFICIAL REPORT
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

DRAFT

Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee

Tuesday 16 April 2024

Session 6



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Tuesday 16 April 2024

CONTENTS

	Col.
DECISION ON TAKING BUSINESS IN PRIVATE	1
CLIMATE CHANGE PEOPLE'S PANEL.....	2

NET ZERO, ENERGY AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

13th Meeting 2024, Session 6

CONVENER

*Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands) (Con)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Ben Macpherson (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Bob Doris (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)

*Jackie Dunbar (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)

*Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab)

*Douglas Lumsden (North East Scotland) (Con)

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:

Scott Cruickshank (People's Panel)

Louise Franklin (People's Panel)

David Harrold (People's Panel)

Eliil Jeyakumar (People's Panel)

Kevin Roarty (People's Panel)

Karen Shakespeare (People's Panel)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Peter McGrath

LOCATION

The Mary Fairfax Somerville Room (CR2)

Scottish Parliament

Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee

Tuesday 16 April 2024

[The Convener opened the meeting at 09:30]

Decision on Taking Business in Private

The Convener (Edward Mountain): Good morning, and welcome to the 13th meeting in 2024 of the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee.

The first item on the agenda is a decision on whether to take items 2, 3 and 5 in private. Item 2 is consideration of a draft letter on the resources and waste common framework; item 3 is consideration of a draft letter on net zero information in legislative documents; and item 5 is consideration of the evidence that we will hear today from the people's panel on climate change. Do we agree to take those items in private?

Members *indicated agreement.*

The Convener: Thank you. We will now move into private session and will resume in public promptly at 11.20 for our evidence-taking session with the people's panel on climate change.

09:31

Meeting continued in private.

11:25

Meeting continued in public.

Climate Change People's Panel

The Convener: Good morning to those who are just joining us, and welcome back to those who joined us earlier, before we went into private session.

We have apologies from Mark Ruskell, who is unable to join us today because, unfortunately, he is not well.

Our next item of business is an evidence session with six representatives of the people's panel on climate change. Back in September 2023, the committee agreed to establish a people's panel to help us with our consideration of how the Scottish Government could better engage with the public on climate change.

A total of 23 individuals were selected to sit on the panel. The panel convened over two residential weekends and held two online sessions in February and March 2024, when it gathered evidence from a variety of witnesses. On 11 April, the panel reported on its findings and recommendations.

At our meeting today, we will discuss the report with a selection of representatives from the panel. Thank you all for joining us. We are delighted to have you here. The last time I saw you, you were about to embark on your work, and I was shooting off so that I could watch the rugby matches. A lot has happened since then.

On behalf of the committee, I thank you all for your dedication and hard work, which we can see from the report that you have presented and we have read with great interest.

I will ask each witness, starting with Karen Shakespeare, to introduce themselves and to tell us where they are from. I will then ask the committee members to do the same.

Karen Shakespeare (People's Panel): I am from Ayrshire, which is down on the west coast.

Kevin Roarty (People's Panel): I am originally from Edinburgh and now live in Paisley.

Elil Jeyakumar (People's Panel): I am based in Edinburgh.

David Harrold (People's Panel): I am from Stromness in the Orkney Islands.

Louise Franklin (People's Panel): I am from East Dunbartonshire.

Scott Cruickshank (People's Panel): I am from Edinburgh.

The Convener: Thank you. We will go round the committee members. I will start. I am the convener of the committee and I represent the Highlands and Islands region.

Ben Macpherson (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP): Good morning. It is good to see you again. I am the member of the Scottish Parliament for the Edinburgh Northern and Leith constituency. I am also the deputy convener of the committee.

Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab): Hi, everyone; it is nice to see you again. I am an MSP for the Central Scotland region and a member of the committee. I live in Blantyre in South Lanarkshire.

Bob Doris (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP): Good morning, everyone. Thank you for coming along today. I am the member of the Scottish Parliament for Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn.

Douglas Lumsden (North East Scotland) (Con): Good morning to the witnesses. I am an MSP for the North East Scotland region and I live in Aberdeen.

The Convener: Sorry, Jackie I should not have pushed the button—I forgot you were here. My mistake.

Jackie Dunbar (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP): Good morning. I live in Aberdeen and I am the MSP for Aberdeen Donside.

The Convener: Thank you. I have just proved that you do not need to touch any buttons, because the gentleman over there will make sure that the microphones are activated. I made the mistake, but none of you will.

Before we move into specific questions, I will ask for your brief reflection on what you have been doing. We will go around in the same order.

Karen Shakespeare: I found it quite exciting to be asked about climate change and to be asked to join in. I work several jobs in several different places, so the thought of people asking me to have an electric car that I cannot afford to rent, let alone buy, is utterly ridiculous. I am really not into people wanting me to change things about my house that I cannot afford. I do not mind helping out with climate change and doing things that I can afford to do, and I feel that quite a lot of other people in the country are in my position. I felt that it was important that I took part, so that I could raise those issues that other people might not be able to see, reflect or even understand. It was important for me to put my voice in.

11:30

Kevin Roarty: I am a big fan of the concept of deliberative democracy. I had not heard of it until I

came to the panel. For this sort of topic, I thought that it was an ideal way to engage. I hope that the pilot panels have proved useful to both the public and the Parliament and that the pilot will be further rolled out for other subjects. I enjoyed the experience, and it is very worth while.

Eliil Jeyakumar: I echo what my fellow panellists have said. It is an exciting process to be engaged in. Being asked to come and be part of the deliberative democracy process made me feel included. Usually, people feel at a distance from parliamentary processes and parliamentary politics, so it is a good step to take.

David Harrold: I reiterate the fact that deliberative democracy is a gift to the people of Scotland and its electorate. In Scotland, we appear to be ahead of the game compared with many countries. In our sessions, we heard evidence about citizens assemblies, but many of them seemed cumbersome and unwieldy. In the people's panel, we felt representative, represented, relevant and listened to by the participation and communities team.

We may move on later to the task that we were set on top-down communication but, if we were marking the Scottish Government on that subject, it would probably get a solid B minus, with the comment that much good work has been done but much more is needed. For context, to back that up, a sizable minority in our group—who, by their very presence, are already engaged in the subject matter—had not heard of heat pumps or did not know about their effectiveness or importance in the whole message, so you can see why we think that there is still much to be done.

Finally, having been self-employed most of my days, I often think that the best committee is a committee of one, but that was absolutely not the case in the people's panel, so I learned not to be cynical about the process. I must confess that I was fearful of us all eventually adopting a groupthink, nodding-dog mentality. However, my experience could not be further from that. It has been enlightening and fascinating at times but, most of all, it has been a fairly compelling journey through a democratic process, the results of which we hope you will find informative, honest and helpful in your quest to assess the Scottish Government's progress in this most crucial of topics.

Louise Franklin: I reiterate the points that David Harrold and the other panellists have made. The reason why I came to the panel is that I had to retire through ill health, and I felt that I needed to do something that would bring me back on board with working for and with other people. I found it an exciting and interesting area because—I am ashamed to say—I did not know very much about it at all. I now know an awful lot more, and there is

lots more to learn. However, as David Harrold said, I am one of the people who did not know what a heat pump was, and I did not know a lot of the things that are going on in the country. I have found the whole process enlightening and I am impressed with some of the initiatives that are happening in Scotland.

There are some trailblazers in Orkney, where David Harrold is from, who are pushing things there in particular, but there is still a lot of work to do, and I am mindful of some of the things that Karen Shakespeare has been talking about. There are many people—and not just low-income people or those on day-to-day incomes—for whom some of the initiatives are very expensive or unaffordable. We need to consider that.

Scott Cruickshank: I have learned about recycling and heat pumps, and about how climate targets are not being met at the moment. I have learned that not enough information is available in primary schools, libraries, community centres or other public places. I think that the community climate hubs are a necessity. The panel has helped me so much, but I want to give advice to MSPs about what I have learned. For example, there need to be more climate hubs, and the main reason for that is the future generations of the people of Scotland who will suffer because of climate change.

The Convener: Thanks, Scott, and thank you all for your contributions. I now have a difficult task. Unfortunately, committees are not panels of one, David; otherwise, I would be able to ask all the questions, and I would not upset my fellow committee members by not letting them ask any.

I will try to get as many questions in as possible. I know that you will all want to answer every question but, sadly, you cannot do that, because I just do not have the time to bring you all in. I want to bring in as many of you as possible, however. I would ask you to keep your answers short. I used to waggle my pen to attract people's attention when I thought they had got to the stage when they should shut up, but the danger was that I might let go of it, and it might come in someone's direction—I promise that it will not. However, if I am looking at you and making this movement, that means that I want to bring in somebody else. It is all about management of time.

I have the first question. You were asked to assess how effective the Scottish Government was in engaging the public on climate change and on our climate change targets. What were the panel's overall conclusions on the effectiveness of the public engagement strategy?

If you want to start off on that, raise your hand. If you do not want to answer, look the other way.

You had your hand up first, Scott, so we will go to you first.

Scott Cruickshank: We heard from so many important people. For example, we heard about case studies from Isatis Cintrón Rodríguez, director of the ACE—action for climate empowerment—Observatory in New York. We heard about some of the impacts of climate change that are happening now around the world, including how it affects animals, their food, where they live and their health. All those impacts have touched my heart, and I have learned that they are affecting us now, so we need to do something about it right now. We need to save the next generations of Scottish people.

We learned from the climate hubs that they needed three years' funding to help them do their job. That would help communities more.

The Convener: That is good—and it focuses us. Is the Government doing enough, Kevin?

Kevin Roarty: It could do better. As I understood it, your question was about how well we are communicating. There was a lot of good work going on that I was unaware of, so that is clearly not being communicated as well as it could be. I would encourage a wider celebration of the good things that are going on, rather than only people in the immediate area being aware of them. As I say, it could do better.

The Convener: You said that you would give the Government a B minus, David. Do you wish to amplify that?

David Harrold: That came about because of what I was saying about our being an engaged representative group across Scotland. Just because of where I live—rather than anything to do with me personally—I was much more aware of many of the things that my fellow panel members had not really been aware of. As Kevin Roarty said, there is a lot of information out there. However, although it is not true to say that the top-down approach is not working at all, it is not working well enough.

Scott Cruickshank touched on climate hubs. Those are a great resource for you guys; for goodness' sake, fund them. Those will help people. They will give people the trust to engage at a local level and a point of contact to help with things such as explaining heat pumps.

The Convener: That is useful. Recommendation 4 in your report was such that we have to get the message out there.

Ben Macpherson: My question follows on well from what you and the convener have said. You made three recommendations on the theme of communication. Will you tell us a bit more about the evidence that you heard to suggest that the

Scottish Government could do more to improve its communication on climate change?

Kevin Roarty: A “consistent positive media campaign” was recommended because there does not appear to be one just now. Pockets of good work are going on—for example, in local news, maybe in the local paper—but not everybody across Scotland is aware that these important things are happening. It is about widening the communication rather than keeping it limited to the locality in which works are going on.

Ben Macpherson: Is there a responsibility on the media to amplify some of the good work that is going on? If the Government seeks to raise awareness of it, that is only part of the story. The media has then got to take it forward—to tell that story.

Kevin Roarty: That would certainly help. There is no doubt about that. Even a central store of archival material, such as clips, would enable people in Bathgate to find out about something that was happening in Orkney, for example. If you happen to be watching the news when that comes on, you will catch it, but what if you were working or did not see the news because you were at the football? It is about how you keep that message hanging around so that people can access it.

Another of our recommendations is about utilising existing spaces that people go to, whether through a newsletter or an update or even a terminal in a library where they could access that material. It was mentioned earlier that a lot of good information is out there but can be quite tricky to find. There needs to be a way to make it easier for people who have an interest in the topic to find those resources about what has been done and what is planned.

The Convener: I am keen to get everyone in. Louise, you made reference to learning more about what was going on. Would that be a positive way of doing it?

Louise Franklin: There are reasons why people are not taking everything on board, and we need to look at that. Some of it is to do with the way in which we put it across, so we need to look at different approaches to getting the message out there. For instance, for the youth, maybe we should use TikTok more, and all those modern things that I know nothing about, to get them to come on board. I know that we do some of that, but we might need to do more.

One thing that we noticed was people saying that we should try face-to-face communication. It is not always about looking at something through the computer. There are lots of different opportunities that we could look at, but we do not need to reinvent the wheel. There is a lot out there, and it would be good for us to harness

those things and share them. That is why Scott Cruickshank’s idea about a community hub is good. There is a lot in that. The funding would not be so much, because we can utilise what has already been done and add to it, rather than starting again.

Ben Macpherson: Thanks, Louise. I think that Karen Shakespeare wanted to come in.

11:45

Karen Shakespeare: It is really important that we remember that positive messages are more important than negative doom-and-gloom stuff. Climate change is really important, and people are focused on the doom and gloom of it, but we should be really positive about what we are achieving as a country and the key areas that are doing really well. Even celebrating the small achievements of cities, small towns or villages is important to the whole country and the whole dynamic. Positive messages would bring about a more positive end result.

Ben Macpherson: I agree.

David Harrold: My points have already been covered, mainly by Louise Franklin.

Ben Macpherson: I think that that covers all the communications updates that we had, convener.

The Convener: I want to push a little bit. How much of the evidence that you heard over your weekend engagements was new and how much could we have heard through means other than your coming here to speak about it? How can the Government get the message out to everyone?

Scott Cruickshank: I think that we need to do a lot more so that people learn about public transport, including train stations and bus stations—transport in general—and so that they can see what is happening. A lot of people do not know about climate change. A lot of people would just say, “Oh, that’s it. There’s nothing that we can do. We’ll leave it to somebody else to deal with.” However, everybody in Scotland has a responsibility to do their bit to save the climate and to help to slow down climate change for the future generations of Scotland.

The Convener: I totally agree that that is critical. How are we going to get that message out there? Does anyone have any thoughts that are not in the report? You have come up with various ideas. Does anyone want to add to those?

Louise Franklin: We talked about using the arts—music and art—to create different things to demonstrate the issue and to capture people who would not normally engage with written materials. There are a lot of media out there that we can use.

I noticed that one of the groups in Africa utilised the grandparents—they have a special role; it is a matriarchal society. It had the grandparents telling stories about how things were playing out for them and what changes needed to be made. Given that it was more of a family and community activity, people tended to take it more on board.

We looked at some interesting case studies that helped us. I was looking over the notes the other day and wondering what we would say here because there is so much.

The Convener: Karen Shakespeare, you mentioned doing good news stories, not bad news stories. However, to reinforce the message and get it across, do we need to say, “If we don’t do this, this is what is going to happen.”? Do we need to give the negative side to develop the positive?

Karen Shakespeare: Louise Franklin talked about the arts and culture section of the Government and where the funding comes from. As a group, we all liked the idea of using art, but that was not voted on because it did not meet the criteria of the questions that we were asked.

If funding was put towards giving some positive news or negative news, what would happen? If there were plays, poems and some public space artwork, we could bring in children and people who are not in education. All the young people who are not in education—school leavers or those who do not attend school—could be brought on board to do some public engagement artwork, art forums or music. Art does engage, and it could be any type of art, such as dance, drama or theatre. Louise Franklin is right that that would bring people in. You would capture the older audience and you would get a newer audience, and you would also get people who might just enjoy a bit of the black humour and black comedy. You would capture a whole load of people who you would not really capture anywhere else.

Other people on the panel mentioned public transport and signs. At Central station, there is now a sign that uses British Sign Language, so that people who cannot hear can see information on what the trains are doing. What is the harm in having climate awareness stuff or information popping up now and again on such signs? We could use the spaces that we already have available and that we are not utilising.

The Convener: Perfect. David?

David Harrold: I will be quick. I spoke to Neil Kermode, who, as you will know, is the chairman of EMEC—the European Marine Energy Centre—in my home town of Stromness. His take is that we do not really have a software or hardware problem, because everything is happening and working as regards the levels of communication, but we have a wetware problem, in that we have a

problem with people’s perception and getting the message through, if you like.

We have talked a lot about trusted sources. Those will mainly come not from a top-down approach but from a bottom-up approach. I therefore again encourage the committee to consider the funding that you are putting in locally. Most of the local authorities have climate officers. You should use them and fund them. Also, to go back to the hubs, you should fund them and give them more than one year’s funding at a time, because nobody wants a P45 every 12 months. You will not get the right people—well, you will get the right people, but they will not stick around. You have to give the hubs longer-term funding.

The Convener: A P45 every 12 months—that is a horrible thought.

Ben Macpherson: Just as a point of clarity, we will, of course, take all the recommendations and press the Government on them. It is for the Government to make the decisions about funding and policy changes although, obviously, Parliament votes on that. I hear your point about what to press on, and we will definitely consider that and raise it with the Government.

David Harrold: If we press you, you will press the Government.

Louise Franklin: We spoke to representatives from three different climate hubs, and all three said that the funding situation is their major issue, because it means that they cannot plan ahead and cannot put in place what they need. They need a minimum of three years of funding, but they get only a one-year fund. By the time that they get that money through, they are catching up with themselves and thinking, “We really can’t plan ahead, because we don’t know if we will have the money for the next stage.” That makes for very short-term rather than longer-term planning.

The representatives of the three hubs also said that they tried to share their information with one another, but a huge amount of work needs to be done on that. Somebody needs to oversee the whole thing and say what is happening. That is where our recommendation on schools came from. The approach is a wee bit piecemeal everywhere. This is an important issue, and we need to ensure that all children, young people and adults—the most diverse group of people—get to know that it is a big issue.

The Convener: One of the committee members will ask about schools later in the questioning session, so I will politely park the school idea at this stage. Bob Doris has some questions.

Bob Doris: I was just googling “climate hubs” there to see what would come up, so the panel

members have already got me trying to learn a bit more.

The report makes five recommendations in relation to making it easier for everyone to contribute to tackling climate issues. I liked the expression that there is an “action gap”—not a willingness gap, but an action gap. Does any of you want to say a little bit more about that?

I am taken with the climate hub idea, and it is being made easier for people to engage and to act. Can you give concrete examples of things that the Government or local authorities can consider doing that would make it easier for people not just to be aware of climate change and its challenges but to identify and fill the action gap that is referred to in the report?

Karen Shakespeare: Louise Franklin said that the approach is piecemeal. It is not about doing one little thing—everything has to join together. For example, someone can take part and help a wee bit by using public transport, such as a bus. However, for that to happen, the public transport must service where they need to go to if they are to ditch their car. It also needs to be cheap enough for people to use it. It is not cheaper for me to drive my car from Irvine to Glasgow and to park it than it is for me to get a return train ticket, but it is cheaper for me to drive than it is to catch the train, which is a bit ridiculous.

It is all about looking at the costs and the factors with regard to what people can do to help themselves and to help to tackle climate change. Yes, that is about making public transport cheaper and more accessible for everyone, but it also means that someone has to oversee where everything links together.

I will give the example of the mums and dads who like to drop off their kids at school in the morning. There is free bus travel for any kids or young people in education up to the age of 22. Without wishing to be rude, I want to know why we are not overseeing such transportation and ensuring that there are bus stops in place for the young ones. That would allow parents to drop them off safely and for buses to take them to school without creating huge traffic jams. Achieving that is all about ensuring that schools interlink with the parents.

This is about connections. Someone needs to start communicating with people on the ground. It is nice that the Government wants to do something about the situation, but the Government must ensure that its approach filters down to the councils, which then need to filter that down to where people need it most. Some of that will be down to the level of schools and their communications, which then filter down to parents

and anyone else who is involved. Another aspect is disability services.

It is not a case of one size fitting all. The approach must fit different people in different situations. I understand that that is a bit of a challenge, but it is not just about one thing; it is about how people can change their habits. Yes, we have looked at lights, heating and everything else, but it is the general day-to-day things that will make a huge difference, because those are the things that everybody does. This is about how everybody can change a small thing to make a difference, which will help with the bigger picture, and that is what we are looking at.

Bob Doris: All that was helpful, but there was a really helpful point in your response. You started off by mentioning something that it is challenging for politicians to fund and achieve. How can we significantly improve bus services and make them more affordable? Work is under way in that area, but I will not go off on a tangent.

You then gave the specific example of the school run. We cannot fix everything at once, but we can work in specific areas to make a real and meaningful difference. I found that concrete example really helpful. Can the other participants share with us other concrete examples of how the Scottish Government or local authorities can support communities in relation to the action gap?

Eliil Jeyakumar: I will give a quick example. We have heard about different methods of shared transport, which happens more locally, such as car shares and community transport options. We need to have different options available and the infrastructure to enable those to function. The increased number of options also need to be more co-ordinated.

Louise Franklin: The climate hubs are bringing people together to try to solve local issues relating to climate change. Those could be low-level issues, such as litter and pollution. They could also try to get businesses engaged in addressing local issues.

12:00

One of our recommendations is that, if we are funding businesses, we should be looking for some payback, and businesses should be taking on board climate awareness. It is a case of “We’ll give you money, so here is what you’re going to do.” The climate hubs are there to find out what is needed locally, discuss that, decide what they think are the highest priorities, and come up with solutions, which could be to do with transport or a range of other things.

Bob Doris: Again, that is really helpful. I am conscious that the Circular Economy (Scotland)

Bill has revenue aspects to it. Money could be ploughed back into community initiatives. You are allowing us to join the dots about how revenues can be used as effectively as possible.

David Harrold: I will give a practical example. I am sure that my fellow panel members are fed up with hearing about Orkney, but when you come into the airport in Kirkwall, one of the first leaflets that you will see is about car-share schemes. Orkney lends itself to those, because of the size of the place. It lends itself to electric vehicles, so we have electric cars there. Such projects could be spread. As Karen Shakespeare said, buses are difficult, but there are other approaches, instead of people having to hire a car. Car-share schemes are affordable, plentiful and accessible, and they can use electric vehicles. There must be other areas of Scotland in which such schemes could be introduced.

Bob Doris: Do I have time to ask a further question?

The Convener: One more.

Bob Doris: I do not want to squeeze out other members who wish to come in.

I was struck by the keep-it-positive mantra that comes up all the time. I suppose that there is a lesson there for politicians. I am a back-bench MSP of the party of Government, and I want to make things look as positive as possible, even when they are just okay. When things are just okay, Opposition politicians want them to look as bad as possible. We are all part of that—of not being positive.

In relation to keeping it positive, there was mention of how people could get involved in climate hubs. Do climate hubs have to be bricks and mortar or specific to one building? I am thinking about local sports centres, supermarkets and football stadiums. Could a climate hub coordinator encourage organisations, ensure that the positive stories are shared with the community and set out the pathways for involvement? Did you look at that? Am I fleshing out what the recommendations mean or do not mean in practice?

Scott Cruickshank: I have been looking at hubs recently. They are difficult to find. There are only four in Scotland at the moment. We need more advice about setting up and funding climate hubs through local government and council bodies.

Bob Doris: That is very helpful.

Kevin Roarty: On keeping it positive, a lot of the messaging is around the issues. You hear people commenting that they are quite tired of hearing about the issues. The issues are fairly widely communicated; what is missing is the

positive things that are happening and, as we said earlier, the sharing of the good news stories. There is good work going on, but not everyone is aware of it. The negative stuff is all over the news—you can hardly miss it—but let us find a way to share the positive stuff more widely, for example what Scotland has done this month, quarter or year. Let us be proud of that and celebrate the good things that are happening.

Karen Shakespeare: To answer your question, it does not need to be a bricks-and-mortar building, but there are lots of youth centres out there and lots of new mums with babies who are not getting much connection. What we could potentially do is to encourage the youth centres to open up to allow new mums and dads to bring in the wee ones, and we could teach them about climate change and climate hubs and do some wee projects with them such as how to recycle, how to change things and what they could do with bringing up the wee ones. That way, they could do the meet and greet, we could talk about the climate and share that and they would be able to go away and talk about it with other new mums and dads and with family members. In that way, we could reach a new generation and an older generation, and it would feed through everywhere.

Monica Lennon: Thank you again, everyone, for your brilliant ideas, and to the 23 members of the climate change people's panel. I have scribbled down lots of notes, but I will stick to some of the questions that I had planned. One was to come back to the issue of finance and financial support. The panel has called on the Scottish Government to increase financial support to enable people to take action that will help the Government and Scotland to meet our really important climate targets. That includes free bus travel, which has been talked about already.

I am interested to hear what evidence the people's panel heard about the need for more financial support to help individual people. Karen Shakespeare talked about how a lot of the measures that are discussed are not affordable for everyone, which I think that we all recognise. I am interested to hear more about the evidence and what kind of financial support you think would be useful.

Scott Cruickshank: The available evidence is that there is no funding available for heat pumps for people who own their houses. That is a major issue at the moment and a lot of worry. For people to afford a heat pump in their own house, would that be funded through the Government or would it be extended as a mortgage through the local banks? Who will be responsible for that and who will take responsibility to make sure that it is all done professionally? Will there be a certain type of person who fits heat pumps? What certification will

they have? A house also has to be insulated for a heat pump to be fitted, so it will cost a lot of money.

The Convener: Monica, do you want to answer that? It is slightly within our remit, but it really falls within the heat in buildings bill. You are right, Scott, that it is absolutely critical, and I hope that the relevant people are listening. As you rightly say, heat pumps, insulation and double glazing are all expensive, and all of those things need to be costed out. It is right that you are flagging that up and good that it is flagged up. The matter is slightly outwith the committee's remit, but I will pass it back to Monica. She may have a better answer than that.

Monica Lennon: Rather than give a direct answer, I thought that it might be better to build on the important points that Scott Cruickshank has made. There is the issue of financial investment, whether it is heat pumps or something else, but for individual householders, there could be an element of risk, not just about the money but about how we know that we can trust the tradespeople who come into our home and that the work can be properly certified. As well as addressing the issue of financial support, perhaps people can add to that. I hope that the Government is listening and can help us as a committee to answer Scott Cruickshank's question more directly.

In terms of the financial support, was it mostly about helping individuals or was it also about doing things at a neighbourhood level? I think that you did some work on district heating schemes.

Louise Franklin: We had some evidence that, if people were in a big building, they could share a heat pump for the whole building. At the moment, the infrastructure is not there for things like that, but it could be. That is where investment needs to happen to move things forward, because that would be much cheaper than everyone having their own heat pump.

Lots of new technology is being developed, and there needs to be investment in that. It is all about money, is it not? I understand that you are in a difficult position in that you have to decide what to do and what to hold back on, but there definitely needs to be investment. People are very worried about their personal situations. Most of the 23 of us who were on the panel were concerned about the impacts of doing these things. We want to try to tackle climate change, but the money involved is holding us back.

It is very expensive. A lot of people were saying that you can get a grant for a heat pump for about £7,000. That sounds fantastic, but we heard evidence that people first have to get their house into a zero-emission type of state, so they have to spend a lot of money upgrading lots of things in

their house before they can get the heat pump fitted. That is problematic, because people just do not have the money. There is an investment fund for things such as solar panels. If people can pay the money up front, in time the fund will pay them back, but it is a lot of money up front that people do not really have.

Day to day, people are finding it really difficult, although they want to do what they can. Maybe resources can be shared—I do not know. It is not just about people who are on low incomes; a lot of middle-income people are struggling with paying the mortgage and with food prices. Everything is going up, so it is becoming very difficult.

Monica Lennon: I will ask about buses in a moment, but given what Louise has just described, it sounds as if there might have been an argument in your discussions that a bit more co-ordination would help. Individual households might feel that doing this would be quite a big leap of faith, but if they were working alongside their neighbours or others in the community, that pooling of resources might help. Before we go on to talk about buses, does anyone have a final comment on that point?

Kevin Roarty: On where the money comes from, the one thing that struck me as a bit odd was that cheap, renewable energy that is produced in Scotland has to go on the open market and get sold back to people at gas energy prices. That seems crazy. There is a clear differential there. If you can produce a kilowatt for X and you have to sell it back to the public at 3X or 4X, how does that make any sense?

Is there a way that Scotland could consume its renewable energy locally, where it is generated, so that buying it from the market is not needed and the money that is freed up could go into other initiatives? I do not know whether that is an option or whether or not that power is devolved, but, as a concept, it would seem like a way to raise funds. There is a significant gap between what we pay for energy and what it costs.

Monica Lennon: Thank you, Kevin. You make some really important points.

Buses have been mentioned, and one of your recommendations is free bus travel. To make bus travel free for everyone would require a lot of investment and there would be a cost to the public purse. Did you hear evidence on how such a policy would work? Might it achieve savings elsewhere or in the longer term? Did you hear any evidence about how it could be funded—what would work and what would not?

The Convener: I will give that question some context. The committee looks at concessionary bus travel, which costs about £230 million, so making travel free on every single bus across Scotland might cost substantially more than that.

David Harrold might say that he will power it all from the energy from Orkney. Does anyone want to comment on that point? It was recommendation 17, I think.

12:15

Karen Shakespeare: Before you can lay down any financial investment or say, “No—you can’t do that,” you need to have a proper overview of where the buses are needed. When I was younger, there used to be lots of bus services. Now that I am a lot older, a lot of the bus services have been sliced and diced and cut, which means that people need to use other ways of getting to where they want to be.

As a climate hub and a climate panel, we are here to give you recommendations on how to sort things out and help the country. That includes by making services more available. You might think, “Dude, we can’t make those services free for everyone—it would cost a bomb.” Is there a way that we can make services more available? We can really reduce the cost. It should not cost me £10 to go from Troon to Ayr by bus—that is for a single. There needs to be a reality check on the part of the people who run the bus services.

Without being rude, the Scottish Government gives a lot of money to public transport to do what it needs to do. Whether we are talking about rail or buses, everyone gets a cut of the money. That money comes from us, you guys and everyone else in the country; it comes from various things. Without being rude, I do not think that it would be that hard to find the money. You simply need to move it around. I know that you will say, “But that’s a lot harder than you say it is.” That is true.

However, as we make clear in some of the other recommendations, we give lots of money to businesses and corporations, but we are not getting it back. We are not even seeing it trickling back. It is not coming back full stop. All the recommendations that we have made need to be looked at as part of a proper overview of how things can be moved around. It will be necessary to physically move things around. It is not simply a case of deciding, “Oh, we’ll just do this.” It will be necessary to physically move things around and get things working. At that point, everything will fall into place.

Let us not lie—that will not happen overnight. It will take five, 10 or 15 years to get everything functioning and flowing in the way that we want it to flow. It is not realistic to think that that will happen overnight. We are talking about a long-term investment. As a community—the country is a big community—we need to put in an investment, and we expect the people who are

running the country to put in an investment, too. It is a long-term goal; it is not a short-term thing.

Monica Lennon: Thank you, Karen. David—

The Convener: I am sorry, Monica. This is where I get myself into trouble with committee members. Time is marching on, and it always goes more quickly when it is an interesting subject. I will take one more person on that question before moving on to Douglas Lumsden, if that is all right with you, Monica. I will come back to you at the end.

Does anyone else want to add to what Karen Shakespeare has just said?

David Harrold: For context, I think that recommendation 17 could come into the category of being a bit of a wild card—a headline grabber, if you like. As Karen Shakespeare said, it is there to challenge you. However, it is quantifiable—in other words, it will cost a lot, but you will be able to work out how much it costs. The objective is to take people off the roads and out of cars and to reduce the country’s carbon output. Recommendation 17 is there to prompt thought.

The Convener: It certainly opened my eyes.

Douglas Lumsden: I will move on to the theme of business, on which you made three recommendations. One of those calls for the Scottish Government to require businesses that receive public funding to support local communities to take climate action. Can you tell us a little bit more about the evidence that you heard and what you would like businesses to provide?

David Harrold: I will take that one.

We are aware that Scottish Enterprise quite recently—I think that it was in quarter 2 of 2022-23—introduced an approach that aligned business support with its own net zero targets. That process has started; however, I think that it was not felt to be ambitious enough, because, although a business supported by Scottish Enterprise must have in place a credible plan to reduce carbon emissions to net zero, that has to happen only by 2045. The feeling was that the approach went too far into the future, was not accountable enough, could be more pointed and shorter term and could have achievable targets. It is easy for a business just to say, “Yeah, we can do that. We’ll put that in place”, but there needs to be more accountability. That is where the objection stemmed from.

Douglas Lumsden: There were two other recommendations that were not agreed unanimously and for which there was only majority support. The first was on

“Government regulation of business around climate targets and not subsidising companies with negative impact.”

Karen, you mentioned that, but is there anything else that you would like to add, perhaps on what you heard about businesses receiving subsidies without giving anything back?

Karen Shakespeare: The panel spoke to a bunch of different people about climate change and business, and the recommendation reflects our view as a panel that quite a lot of the money that companies need to do X, Y and Z is being given by the Scottish Government, but they are not putting any money back into the community. I am talking about both small and big businesses. The Covid loans, for example, were to help businesses do what they wanted to do, but none of that money has come back. Money has been given to electricity, gas and shell companies to support them in doing whatever they need to do; however, none of that money has come back to us and all our bills are going up. How do they start putting money back into the community that they are working with or are based in?

We also said that that issue might not be central to Scotland and might, instead, be central to England and the British Government. We understand that, but we think that, with any money that comes from the Scottish people to businesses, there should be some reward to the Scottish people, instead of the businesses becoming rich and not giving anything back.

We have been made aware of other places that need funding, but you as the Scottish Government cannot fund them, because the money is not there. If other companies are getting money, because you think that it is more important to do that, that money should be trickling back into, for example, the climate hubs, education or other projects that would be useful but which you do not have the money for. Those companies have the money to plough into such projects, and the money gets recycled and goes back into the community where it needs to go.

Douglas Lumsden: But not all the panelists agreed with that. What were the other views on the matter?

Karen Shakespeare: We did not agree, because, first of all, some did not feel that the recommendation met the questions that were asked and, secondly, some wondered whether it could actually be done. With some recommendations, some could not say whether they would be able to physically happen.

Personally, I think that this should be able to happen. It would be quite easy to put it in writing as part of any agreement. If companies take money from you, they should put X amount or a small percentage back. That is my personal reflection—as you have noted, everyone will have their own views. However, the question was

whether you could make that sort of thing happen. We were trying to reach a unanimous view on recommendations in which we felt that everything being asked for could be achieved. That is what happened there.

Douglas Lumsden: I will move on. One of your recommendations is that

“There needs to be a change to the way national capital projects like installation of heat pumps and home insulation are administered.”

Can you tell us a bit more about any examples that you had heard about in that respect and say why some panellists could not agree with that recommendation?

Karen Shakespeare: Without being rude, I would say that it was just way too expensive.

Look at someone like me. I have seven jobs that are all part time and I also look after my parents—so I am juggling quite a lot. I am paying all my bills and I am not on benefits, so I am doing quite all right; I am flouncing along quite nicely. However, as a Government, you have not done a financial impact statement, which you should have done before you put out the climate targets, and you are asking everyday people, including yourselves, to spend thousands of pounds—up to 10 grand or even more—to change aspects of their accommodation or whatever building they are living in, and if they do not own a place, their rent or community charges will go up. You are not looking at the people on the ground—the little worker bees. That is the problem. There are things that might help people, but they will not help everyone. I understand that that is a bit of a challenge.

It was brought to the panel’s attention that every council is operating these schemes differently. Some people on the panel had heat pumps, electric cars and solar panels and they got their funding slightly differently. The members of the panel did not understand why it worked differently—if the incentive is national, it should be a case of saying, “Here is everything that we can offer. This is what is available to you.” It should not be chopped and changed depending on where you live.

Douglas Lumsden: That is very helpful.

The Convener: I will bring in David Harrold, and then I will have to move to the last question, because the clock is ticking.

David Harrold: If I may, I will go back to the previous question and raise a point specifically on the administration of some of the national schemes. As you know, I live in Orkney. I can give direct anecdotal evidence of our experience on the ground as well as telling you what I have picked up through conversations. I spoke to a builder in

Orkney who is the chairman of the National Federation of Builders and he and his colleagues are continually frustrated by what are effectively central belt companies coming to the more remote areas to install insulation. We learned from the start that insulation in housing is one of the key things that we have to put in, especially in old housing stock. However, those contracts appear to have been awarded nationally. We feel that it would be much more effective to administer that work through local government, using local sources. The benefits of that approach would be numerous in that you would be benefiting trusted sources—trusted builders—but you would also be keeping the money local. I think that you would get a much higher level of engagement from people who want to put insulation in their houses.

If I could give you one specific piece of information, my partner and I are involved in a property let in Orkney—[*Interruption.*] I will be quick.

The Convener: You cannot wiggle your pen at me; I am wiggling my pen at you.

David Harrold: I will wiggle it back at you. [*Laughter.*]

You have given the administration of the insulation programme to a contractor company called Everwarm Ltd. The company booked a house with us in Orkney for two days and sent two people up in a van to come across on the water—they went to one of the smaller islands off Orkney, so the journey was even more expensive. All they needed to do to finish the job was install one door. They explained to me that they had taken the wrong door size. They came to Orkney and had the expense of two days of accommodation and the travel from the central belt—that is senseless. I am sure that that is an exceptional case, but it is a case, just the same. If we can, we should be putting a lot more of that money for those contracts into local businesses—it should not all be central belt based.

I see the pen wiggle, so I will stop.

The Convener: You are almost getting the pen launched at you.

We have one more question, which will come from Monica Lennon. Whoever puts their hand up first can answer it.

Monica Lennon: Speaking of positive news, you got a lot of media coverage last week. Looking at some of the headlines, “Lessons on climate” jumps out. Your first recommendation, which was unanimous, is about making climate change a compulsory part of the curriculum, because currently, it is optional in schools. I see that Kevin Roarty already has his hand up to answer. You have told us in the report why you think climate

change education is important, and we would like to hear more about that. Are there examples of young people in school not getting any climate change information?

12:30

Kevin Roarty: It would appear that some schools have already embedded the issue of climate change and what positive things can be done about it into the curriculum. It seems that, without spending too much money, some schools have taken the approach of adding some worksheets into each subject area.

For example, a writing lesson in primary school can involve the children writing something on the topic. Similarly, in maths, if you are going to do a sum, why not make it related to the theme? So, rather than having to come up with a new subject area, it is about embedding the topic into the existing curriculum. There could be some really quick wins there. Given that some schools are already doing that, it is simply a case of sharing that practice to make sure that everybody is included.

Monica Lennon: So, we need to build on that best practice and mainstream that work.

I see that David Harrold also has his hand up.

David Harrold: I think that this issue comes under the category of things that we were all surprised were not already in place. As Kevin Roarty said, we do not have to reinvent the wheel. It is not for us to try to understand the national curriculum, but it would not seem that difficult. It seems a normal and natural thing to do to introduce the issue of climate change as early as possible so that thinking about it becomes second nature, and that learning will then get transferred into the home.

The Convener: You ambushed me, David—I said there should be one answer and you supplied a second.

Before this session, the Parliament’s participation and communities team warned me that I was not going to get away with not being asked a question. I am not going to give you the chance to ask me a question—politicians never let other people ask questions; they work out the question they want to answer and then give that answer—but I guess that the question that you would have wanted to ask me is, what are we going to do with this report now that we have got it? The committee will decide after this meeting what we are going to do, but I can tell you some of the things that we will be doing. For example, the Climate Change Committee will appear before the committee next week, and I am sure that your report and some of the questions that are raised

by it will inform our views and our questions to it. Further, we are about to deal with stage 2 of the Circular Economy (Scotland) Bill, and I am sure that the report will prompt some of the discussions that go on at that point. We constantly have ministers in here from various portfolios, and we will ask them questions informed by our reading of the report.

At the moment, there is a process going on in the Parliament in which Government policies are reviewed to see how they contribute to reaching net zero targets. Conveners and committees are looking at ways to make sure that, when bills and policies are published, we understand whether they not only contribute to achieving the net zero goal but are getting the right messages out, and whether there is the correct funding within the bills. I think that the report will help us with that process.

When you were planning your ambush, David, the deputy convener ambushed me and said that we could write to the minister—subject to the committee's approval, because I cannot do anything as a convener of a committee without the committee's approval—and ask for a written response to your recommendations, which we could then share with you. I am not seeing any dissent from committee members on that point, so I hope that we can agree on that afterwards.

I stress that this has been a committee-driven process; it is not being driven by the Government. Karen Shakespeare suggested things that the Government could do. I can say that, if I were the convener of the Government, I am sure that we could get a lot done, but I am the convener of the committee, so we will have to simply take your points to the Government.

I thank and congratulate you for all the work that you have put in, because there was a lot of work. This is your Parliament and we are here to make sure that what the people want is delivered by the Parliament. As a committee, we are extremely grateful for all that you have done and for all the information that you have given us. I cannot reiterate my thanks enough.

We are now going to have to go into private session to see whether we can agree some of the things that I have just talked about and to review the evidence that we have heard. We will be in touch to keep you updated and point out things that have come about as a result of your participation in this deliberative democracy.

We will now move into private session.

12:35

Meeting continued in private until 12:49.

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