

Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy

Oral evidence: Critical national infrastructure and climate adaptation

Monday 18 July 2022

4.30 pm

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Members present: Margaret Beckett MP (The Chair); Baroness Anelay of St Johns; Lord Butler of Brockwell; Baroness Crawley; Lord Dannatt; Richard Graham MP; Baroness Hodgson of Abinger; Dame Diana Johnson MP; Darren Jones MP; Alicia Kearns MP; Baroness Neville-Jones; Lord Reid of Cardowan; Lord Snape; Viscount Stansgate; Lord Strasburger.

Evidence Session No. 6

Heard in Public

Questions 78—101

Witnesses

I: Steve Double MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs; Robert Mason, Deputy Director, Climate, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs; Greg Hands MP, Energy Minister, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy; Mark Prouse, Deputy Director, Energy Resilience and Emergency Response, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy; Roger Hargreaves, Head of the Civil Contingencies Secretariat, Cabinet Office.

Examination of witnesses

Steve Double MP, Robert Mason, Greg Hands MP, Mark Prouse and Roger Hargreaves.

Q78 The Chair: Thank you all very much for coming to give evidence today. I will ask you to introduce yourselves and say what your responsibilities are briefly, because there are a number of you, and for the benefit of those who are observing the committee's proceedings.

Roger Hargreaves: I am the director of the Civil Contingencies Secretariat in the Cabinet Office. CCS is responsible for anticipating, preparing for and responding to emergencies.

The Chair: We are expecting a Mr Mason from Defra in a moment.

Steve Double MP: I am the recently appointed Environment Minister in Defra, and my portfolio includes the matters before the committee today.

Greg Hands MP: I am Minister of State for Energy, Clean Growth and Climate Change at the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

Mark Prouse: I am deputy director to Mr Hands for energy resilience and emergency response in BEIS, and I am responsible for risk identification and mitigation in the energy sector and emergency response.

Q79 **The Chair:** Thanks very much, all of you. This is the sixth and final evidence session of our inquiry into the critical national infrastructure and climate adaptation. We launched it last November and it is seen to be quite timely, given the weather at the moment. Much of the evidence we have had so far is about the cross-cutting nature of the challenge of climate adaptation, with solutions needed across the boundaries of infrastructure sectors and government departments. Many of our witnesses have lamented the lack of join-up across government on the issue and the lack of ownership over the interdependencies between CNI sectors.

I am afraid that we were very disappointed—it is not the fault of any of you in front of us—and rather shocked that the Cabinet Office decided that it would not send a Minister to give evidence on this topic, although we welcome Mr Hargreaves' attendance. The Paymaster General and Minister for the Cabinet Office has submitted two pieces of written evidence for this inquiry and tells us that he is the Minister for CNI resilience but, when invited to give evidence to this session, said that he merely held a convening role for that evidence. The problem with that is that it suggests that there is not much happening in the Cabinet Office to address this very real risk to national security, or at least that the Minister is not involved in it.

So we are very grateful to Mr Hargreaves for giving evidence today. We are also, if I may say so without any discredit to Mr Hands, particularly grateful to Mr Double for giving evidence to us today in place of the former Minister in his role who has left the Government very recently. I welcome Mr Mason from Defra, who I believe works to Mr Double on this matter. Thank you very much.

As everybody is well aware, as we meet we are in the middle of a major heat wave with, as we are continually told, potentially catastrophic event effects, but the Prime Minister was reportedly absent from the COBR meeting on Sunday. Does this sort of crisis not require the leadership of the Prime Minister? I will ask the two Ministers because I do not think it is fair to ask officials that, but I will have a question for officials on this. I will begin with Greg, because you are the more senior.

Greg Hands MP: Thank you, Dame Margaret, and thank you very much indeed for having us at your committee. The Minister for the Cabinet Office laid out clearly in the media overnight that it is his role to convene

COBR in these circumstances, and it is entirely normal and proper that he be the chair. As you will remember from your own time in government, not every COBR meeting, in fact not many COBR meetings, are chaired by the Prime Minister. He was doing the right thing by chairing COBR on the weather events that we are having, and that is what he did, I believe, over the weekend and today.

The Chair: I do not think anybody disputes that it is the right thing for the Minister for the Cabinet Office to have called a COBR. The only question is whether it should have been the Prime Minister who called it rather than that Minister, and no one is suggesting that he has done anything wrong. I will ask you and then Mr Double whether either or both of you attended the COBR meeting that was held last week. If you did, was the protection of the critical national infrastructure discussed?

Greg Hands MP: I did not personally attend. Lord Callanan attended from BEIS. I am not aware that this was specifically on the agenda, but I can tell you that quite often in BEIS we discuss the resilience of things like our energy system and other systems. I cannot tell you whether it was on the agenda at any of the COBR meetings in the last two days or indeed today.

The Chair: Will you be able to let us know after the meeting?

Greg Hands MP: As you will remember from your own time in government, certain governmental meetings have a public element to them for the agenda. I am sure I can let you know as much as is normal for COBR meetings what was on the agenda following usual government protocols.

The Chair: Thank you. Mr Double?

Steve Double MP: Thank you, Dame Margaret. My understanding of the weekend COBR is that officials from Defra were there, but I do not believe there was a Minister present. Minister Victoria Prentis was at a meeting this afternoon on behalf of Defra.

The Chair: Thank you very much. I will ask officials whether, over the past two years rather than over the last fortnight, they have attended cross-government meetings on the impact of heat waves on CNI. Can you give us any indication as to what activity has been taking place across government to prepare for such potential heat waves?

Mark Prouse: We have had meetings, usually convened by colleagues in the Cabinet Office but also in Defra, looking at heat waves among a number of other severe weather events. These tend to have been on the broad severe weather event risk and looking at our day-to-day operational ability to resist those, as well as an eye to future resilience through the adaptation programme that Defra oversees.

Robert Mason: Defra convened the discussions across the risks that are highlighted by the Climate Change Committee. On infrastructure risks, we have various meetings with the other departments—BEIS, DfT, the

Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, along with Defra—that cover the main critical national infrastructure. That is a regular part of what my team does: looking across the risks in preparation for the programme.

The Chair: Thank you. That is helpful.

Roger Hargreaves: We have a national heat wave plan that is updated annually. It gets tested every May to make sure that it is fit for the summer. That has been in place since the Paris heat wave in 2003.¹ It is a very active process to make sure that we are ready for heat waves, and it covers the full spread of potential impacts from health through to infrastructure. We have also talked a lot about heat waves in the context of the refresh of the national security risk assessment. Heat waves and a number of other climate change-related risks are covered there, so it has been a point of discussion.

If I may refer to one of the earlier questions, I was in the COBR meeting. Obviously we do not talk a lot externally about the content of any Cabinet committee, but the infrastructure impacts are well documented, and as a matter of doctrine we run through all the potential impacts at COBR. I think you can infer from that that we did talk about all the infrastructure impacts, whether expected or potential.

The Chair: Thank you very much. That is extremely helpful.

Q80 **Baroness Neville-Jones:** I want to talk a bit about the third national adaptation programme. In the context of the comments that have just been made about the work that you do on hot weather, if you have been working on that subject for quite some time and updating the national plan, how come we have a situation in which the east coast line is not working tomorrow?

Robert Mason: That would be a question for DfT, Network Rail and the train companies. On the work that we do looking at the risks, the Government have accepted all 61 risks highlighted by the Climate Change Committee in its independent evidence last year. In the climate change risk assessment this year we have accepted that those risks are real and that we need to deal with them. These are the priority risks that it has highlighted. The issue of overheating was particularly about heating in buildings. Obviously there is an impact on infrastructure, but the health risk is from overheating in buildings, and that has been the focus of the overheating discussions.

Baroness Neville-Jones: You are saying that temperature is being given priority over transport and the economy.

Robert Mason: No. The Climate Change Committee, the statutory body, highlighted that the key risk from overheating is the health risk to people in residential buildings and workplaces. There is an impact on business.

¹ Note by witness: The National HeatWave plan has been in place since 2014, and is updated regularly to ensure that it is fit for the summer.

One of the business risks is particularly to do with the productivity of workers and the risk to residents in homes that cannot be adapted easily. That has been the focus of the overheating discussions.

Baroness Neville-Jones: The Climate Change Committee said recently that it was vital—it used the word “vital”—that the next national adaptation programme “provides a genuine step change in the UK’s approach to climate change adaptation”. In the light of what you have just said, you seem to have been focusing on just one key item. Do you accept that this is a bigger thing than people’s homes? The Climate Change Committee made 82 recommendations.

Robert Mason: Yes, the Government have accepted that previous plans and programmes on adaptation have not kept pace with the risk. The Climate Change Committee particularly picked out priority risks, and overheating in buildings was its chief heat problem. It also talked about infrastructure risks and the impact of cascading risks, as it calls them, on infrastructure, which clearly includes heat as well as storms and rain and wind and drought. We have accepted that we have not done enough in the past, and we will do more. We have fallen behind the risk and we need to do a better national adaptation programme next year than we have in previous years.

Q81 **Baroness Neville-Jones:** It seems to me that we are on the same ground: that it has not been good enough so far and it needs to step up. Do you have a programme now for the priorities that will be tackled in the next adaptation programme? I think the Ministers may want to answer this.

Robert Mason: I will be advising the Minister on this, certainly. The programme is due in June 2023. We have taken the evidence from the Climate Change Committee and are working through those risks, including the interdependencies between risks and, particularly in relation to infrastructure, the possible problems caused by cascading risks. The focus of this year’s work is to get a programme that is truly adaptive for this country, having accepted that we have fallen behind the risk in the past.

Baroness Neville-Jones: Do you have a timetable for that, and how many people do you have working on it? It is obviously an important issue, is it not?

Robert Mason: In my adaptation team I have 17 civil servants working on that, but the 61 risks are owned by different departments. They are the owners of the risks. The function of my team is to make people aware of the severity and the interdependence between those risks to help them understand the Met Office climate change projections, to get them to plan for 2-degree warming and assess the impact of 4-degree warming this century, and to provide the information that allows us to write a decent national adaptation programme. That is a lot and quite difficult, as you can imagine.

Baroness Neville-Jones: Are you in Defra performing something of a convening role in that you are going beyond the responsibilities of Defra and into leading on the issue of interdependency?

Robert Mason: Yes, that is right. We are leading on the issue of all the risks and how best to put a programme together to make the country better adapted to the change in climate. That is our role. The timetable for the national adaptation programme is to lay it before Parliament by June 2023. The statutory responsibility is that we respond to the climate change risk assessment. We laid that in Parliament in January this year. That has tended to have been on a five-year cycle since the 2008 Climate Change Act. The commitment is that we will have a new programme by June 2023.

Greg Hands MP: We are very confident in the heat of the robustness and resilience of the electricity system. It is worth pointing out that power lines do not melt and there is no significant impact there. They become slightly less efficient, but not in any particularly consequential way. Our electricity infrastructure is designed to operate in hot weather and we are not expecting any significant issues to be caused on the generation side when it comes to our energy system.

Baroness Neville-Jones: Are you talking specifically about hot weather, or are you talking more generally about the need for adaptation across the—

Greg Hands MP: Sorry, I was referring back to what I thought your original question was about train lines. I was giving the energy equivalent of our energy infrastructure.

Baroness Neville-Jones: More generally, I imagine there is adaptation work to be done.

Greg Hands MP: We are working very hard to make sure that all our systems are fit for reaching net zero in 2050 but also have the right level of resilience when faced with climate change. We are a big part of the solution as well as being part of the infrastructure that we need to be looking at today to make sure that it is resilient. You can combine the two at the same time to make sure that our electricity system will be decarbonised by 2035, making sure that we put in huge additional capacity for this country to meet its climate change objectives while at the same time making sure that our infrastructure today remains resilient.

Baroness Neville-Jones: Yes. It is particularly adaptation that I am focusing on rather than meeting net zero targets, or indeed for that matter mitigation.

Greg Hands MP: I think we are doing both. We are doing all of this. It is not an either/or.

Q82 **Lord Snape:** The first question was about the east coast main line. I am conscious that the Ministers or civil servants are not in the Department for Transport, but do you share my surprise about the announcement this

morning that tomorrow there are no trains between King's Cross and Edinburgh, yet we can run trains between Euston and Glasgow? They are both electrified railway lines and 25,000 volt wires. Why?

Greg Hands MP: Why do we not take that question away and I will get somebody from the Department for Transport to contact Lord Snape or the committee on behalf of the Government? I am not sighted on why that is. I think it would be down to the rail operators rather than any specific aspect of the Government, but I am happy for somebody to contact the committee and Lord Snape on behalf of the Department for Transport.

Q83 **Richard Graham:** My question is on a slightly different point. I am not fixated on a particular train operator's services tomorrow but more widely. I am interested in who keeps their hands on the tiller. If we have a serious heat problem and suddenly our water reserves start shrinking, who in the Cabinet Office or Defra is monitoring our water levels? Who is looking at some of the projects that have been discussed for some years, like the Severn Partnership, where there has been a lot of thinking about how we can hold water back in the Welsh hills, store it there and then pipe it down to make sure that the Thames region does not run out of water and Greg's constituents do not end up having to turn off their showers? Who is in charge of that, ultimately?

Steve Double MP: I am the Minister responsible for that. To reassure the committee, before I left the department to come here I had a meeting with the director responsible to get an update on the current situation of our water supplies. All is well at the moment, but it is clearly something that we need to continue to keep a very keen eye on in the current weather situation. We are very alive to it and very aware of the potential risks.

Richard Graham: At what stage does Defra take this to the Cabinet Office to have a COBR if we are running down to, say, 20 or 30 days' supply? What are the trigger points?

Steve Double MP: I am not aware of what the trigger points are. I assume that officials will advise me on that in due course. As far as it goes at the moment, to reassure you, I, as the Minister responsible, and the department are very much hands on and aware of the risks, should this weather continue.

Robert Mason: Officials will be talking all the time in the lead-up to something like this about the point at which this is not a Defra issue but a wider government issue. Saying when COBR becomes the committee responsible rather than staying with Defra Ministers and the usual Cabinet committee structure is an art, not a science.

Richard Graham: Mr Hargreaves, can you shed any more light on this, because it seems to be pretty vague? Everyone is just saying, "We know it could be a problem, but—".

Roger Hargreaves: We operate a horizon-scanning function across a very wide range of risks, continuously looking to assess whether problems will arise on any number of different fronts. The expectation is that risks and emerging incidents will be managed by a lead government department, but there are occasions when the risk engages other departmental interests, or the lead government department or agency is potentially overwhelmed by the scale of the problem. Heat wave is an interesting example on that front. Although there are primary effects on public health, there are also effects on transport, other forms of infrastructure, major events, wildfires, animal health and so on. Therefore, it is a very good example of the kind of emerging risk that requires central co-ordination.

When we see those risks emerging, we will convene cross-Whitehall meetings, typically COBR meetings, in an effort to make sure that all the work is joined up and that we spot the potential for concurrent or compounding effects between the different strands within the risk and then commission action from departments or collectively. There is a doctrine that sits underneath that that helps us to judge when we need to move to that phase of collective consideration. That is published, but essentially the key trigger is where the extent of the risk runs beyond the capacity of a single department to cope or the effects of the risk have an impact on a wide range of departments.

Richard Graham: The implication is that if this does happen, it will run beyond the capacity of Defra because it will affect a whole series of other departments fairly quickly. In this committee, where we are looking at the national security strategy, I am just trying to get a sense of whether there is a strategy, a plan, that has been gone through and revised and refreshed so that if and when this happens—and there must be a sporting chance that this could happen—Ministers and everybody have a plan that can be rolled out quite quickly, and county councils and local resilience forums know in advance what the plan is.

Roger Hargreaves: Is your question specifically about heat waves or about crises generally?

Richard Graham: It is about heat waves and water specifically, because that is quite topical.

Roger Hargreaves: We carry out a national security risk assessment every two years or so, which identifies the 100-plus categories of risk that we need to monitor. There is a lead government department against each of those risks. Those lead government departments will, where appropriate—and in most cases it is appropriate—corral emergency plans, essentially, that create the capabilities and response arrangements to deal with that risk and often look to mitigate that through upstream policy action. One example is the national heat wave plan that we are enacting at the moment, but you will find those kinds of plans for pretty much all the risks in the risk register.²

² Note by witness: Departments have contingency plans for a range of risks on the risk

The plans will have a lead government department. They will set out the command and control arrangements, including the interface with the centre of government and how that can support with its convening capacity. It will also run through the actions required of government agencies and other arm's-length bodies and will extend to the actions of local responders and private sector operators. Those plans tend to be pretty comprehensive. Obviously they do not provide an absolute blueprint for any event, but they provide the basis for a response.

We then use our crisis management mechanisms to flex those plans to deal with the events in questions. Emergencies throw up things that we cannot plan for, but the act of planning itself provides an important foundation for what we do then and gets us ahead of the problem.

Q84 Lord Butler of Brockwell: I want to follow up on this subject. Mr Ellis told us that he was not the Minister for the policy on national resilience, but that he was responsible for convening the meetings. Who is the Minister responsible for what you have been describing, Mr Hargreaves?

Roger Hargreaves: I think his point about convening related to critical national infrastructure. Cabinet Office Ministers are responsible for broad policy on resilience, stewardship of things like the resilience strategy, and the national security risk assessment, but, as you are extremely well aware, the Cabinet Office has some responsibilities that fall directly to the Ministers in the departments and they have ministerial accountability for that. There are other functions that we perform to support the Prime Minister or on behalf of supporting government as a whole.

The crisis management arrangements I have described fall into the category of supporting the Prime Minister, and Ministers collectively, in the operation of COBR, the operation of other crisis management activity, the assurance of departmental plans, the support for training and exercising. That is a function that we provide to the system as the centre of the system, whereas some of the policy activities, such as the resilience strategy, are areas where we have ministerial accountability directly.

Lord Butler of Brockwell: Mr Ellis is responsible for the resilience strategy, is he?

Roger Hargreaves: Yes.

Lord Butler of Brockwell: If that is the case, is it not a little surprising that he was not willing to come and give evidence to us today?

Roger Hargreaves: He was due to be on the Floor of the House on the impending Northern Irish legislation, which is why I was asked to stand in.

Lord Butler of Brockwell: I do not know whether he knew he was going to be on the Floor of the House at the time he sent this letter, but he said

that it was because he was responsible only for convening meetings, not for co-ordinating the policy itself.

Roger Hargreaves: On critical national infrastructure?

The Chair: I can clarify. He made it clear that he was not prepared to give evidence at any other time on this subject.

Q85 **Lord Butler of Brockwell:** Yes, okay, I see. Thank you very much. Do you have a team in the Cabinet Office that is dedicated to working on CNI resilience?

Roger Hargreaves: I do, but it is very much in that co-ordinating role. There are several other national bodies with significant executive functions for critical national infrastructure, and the main responsibility sits with departments. We are very much in that convening and co-ordinating territory.

Lord Butler of Brockwell: Is there not some danger that, because it is individual departments that have the responsibility, things may fall through the gaps?

Roger Hargreaves: That is a very fair point, and it is one of the things that we explored in the context of the resilience strategy. We looked at some of the models internationally, and essentially we have regulation of critical national infrastructure. Most of the sectors are regulated, and in quite a vertical way. We regulate the electricity sector, for example, quite differently from the way we regulate the water sector, and that reflects what we are trying to achieve, whether it is safety regulation or economic regulation, the shape of the market, the shape of the public service provision. Resilience and other security considerations are a subset of the wider regulatory framework.

The question we asked in the context of our work was: is there space for a more horizontal model? We talk quite a bit to the Australians about this and they have chosen, quite recently, to adopt a horizontal model for the regulation of their CNI sectors.³ Our conclusion is that there is certainly more scope for creating a framework that essentially generates that horizontal set of standards for performance in security and resilience.

We have formed the view that it does not make sense to follow the Australian model, because a lot of the economic and safety regulation areas are quite complex. We would not want, for example, to unpick the way energy markets work to layer across a new horizontal regulation for resilience, but we can lift the standards. Some of those sectors have very high standards for resilience and others less so. Where it is less so, we need to lift it up, and that is where we have settled.

Lord Butler of Brockwell: Is there a single Minister in the Australian

³ Note by witness: In the Australian model, there is a common set of obligations for operators and measures taken by, or powers granted to, government in relation to all critical infrastructure sectors.

model who is responsible for the horizontal approach?

Roger Hargreaves: There is a single agency that oversees this work, but it is in a process of transition. I do not think they have found quite the right model for resilience at large. They came to talk to us about it and they are still exploring the best way to pursue it. They were quite attracted to our model, but it really is a work in progress as far as they are concerned.

Lord Butler of Brockwell: I may be being a bit slow, but could you sum up briefly, so that we have it clearly on the record, the difference between your co-ordinating role and the Australian horizontal model?

Roger Hargreaves: They have a common regulatory framework,⁴ as in standards set with a statutory basis that apply evenly across all regulated sectors. We have a vertical model of regulation, so there is a regulatory framework for the electricity sector that is different to the regulatory framework for the water sector. Each has a resilience component.

Lord Butler of Brockwell: Thank you very much.

Q86 **Viscount Stansgate:** That was the first Division I have ever taken part in that was negated. No one was there to shout “content”.

My question is to the two Ministers. Would you accept that not enough has been done so far to protect our critical national infrastructure from recent extreme weather events and the other effects of climate change?

Greg Hands MP: I will take my infrastructure responsibility, energy, first. I disagree. We believe that our energy infrastructure is very resilient. We have a 99.9%-plus record of making sure that electricity continues to flow. We have a number of exercises where we test that resilience and, as importantly, that Ofgem, National Grid, all our key bodies, are also testing that resilience.

If you will allow me, I will talk a bit about the future, because we are introducing reforms. The Energy Security Bill, which you will be debating in the Lords tomorrow, introduces things like a future system operator, which will take a long-term view of our energy system and make sure that it meets the challenges of getting to net zero over the next 30 years. The future system operator will deal, for example, with the very big picture question of how you get from today’s energy system—a system very much with low capital costs to build energy generation, high costs of electricity generation, not much of an issue with intermittency, and big climate impacts—to a system with high capital costs. The cost of building an offshore wind farm is considerable, but once it is built you have very low generation costs. There is an issue with intermittency, but it is much more climate friendly. The future system operator and, indeed, the whole of our energy policy going forward, including the British energy security strategy launched by the Prime Minister in April, are looking at that transformation.

⁴ See footnote 3.

The key question for our energy system is how to make that long-term move from the energy system that you and I know well to the energy system of the future. That is built very much around resilience, making sure that we are more ready for extreme weather events but at the same time also making sure that the energy system makes its key contribution to reducing emissions in the first place.

Viscount Stansgate: Thank you. A few questions arise. First, you are right about the Energy Security Bill that is about to be debated at this end of the building. Am I right that extreme weather events do not feature in the text of the Bill in any place?

Greg Hands MP: That may be. It is a very long Bill. It is the longest Bill of this Session, but just because it does not say "extreme weather events" on the face of the Bill does not mean that there are no provisions in the Bill to deal with things like extreme weather events. I know that the committee has been looking at some of the lessons from Storm Arwen, for example. We do not put on the face of the Bill, "This is a measure as a result of the inquiries and different reports we have done on Storm Arwen", but I can assure you that lessons learned from Storm Arwen and the different reports that were done are very much fed through into the measures being taken in the Energy Security Bill.

Q87 **Viscount Stansgate:** I will put one other supplementary question to you. The Government's own climate change risk assessment stated, "The UK government accepts that to date our actions have not been sufficient in meeting the increasing risks from climate change". In the light of your answer just now, do you disagree with that assessment, or do you think there is some other explanation for why that sentence appears in the Government's own climate change risk assessment?

Greg Hands MP: I think it is fair to say that, as with all Governments, we are doing better in some areas than in others. One of the areas we are doing particularly well in is electricity decarbonisation and our electricity system. We are absolutely a world leader in that space. Coal today is less than 2% of our electricity generation, and renewables under this Government have gone up as a percentage of our electricity generation from about 7% in 2010 to 43% today. I think we are making real progress in electricity decarbonisation.

Do we have further to go in some other areas? Definitely. On energy efficiency, the fact that we have taken the number of homes in this country rated bands A to C energy efficient from 10% to 46% since 2010 is a great record, but equally it means that 54% of homes are not currently rated as being energy efficient in bands A to C. In many areas we are doing well, but there is still an enormous amount of work to do, and that will be the case for some time. This is an ongoing, continuous process of improvement, but I think the Government's record overall is very good.

Baroness Neville-Jones: I wanted to pick up something that Mr Hands said. It seems rather curious in the light of what you said that the Energy

Security Bill does not make any provision for resilience to the effects of climate change.

Greg Hands MP: Well, it does, because it has things like the future system operator looking at this. It also introduces how we better connect offshore wind to onshore customers and onshore users. There are a lot of measures in the Energy Security Bill that will make the electricity system and the energy system more resilient. It just will not necessarily say in brackets, "This is a result of a Storm Arwen report or as a result of rising temperatures". It will say it, as all legislation does, in a general way to deal with a problem across a multitude of different scenarios.

Baroness Neville-Jones: Perhaps we are using different language on the same point, but I think it is concerning when there are no statutory resilience obligations. In the water sector there is a statutory obligation to be resilient. Is it not time for there to be a similar obligation for the energy sector?

Greg Hands MP: I might bring in Mark Prouse in a second to provide a bit more of the detail. We are always testing the resilience of our energy system. One of the aspects of the report by BEIS on Storm Arwen was to make sure that resilience is judged much more on an outcome basis; that the transmission and distribution cabling system are tested according to outcomes not just inputs. I think that sort of reform has arisen out of lessons from Storm Arwen, for example, which was a very unusual storm but the sort of storm that is likely to occur more frequently in the future.

Baroness Neville-Jones: It was totally paralysing for the places in which it occurred.

Greg Hands MP: It had a considerable impact in the north-east of England and in eastern parts of Scotland. That is definitely not to be denied. I went up there twice, and the Secretary of State went up, to see at first hand. The number of people in parts of Durham who were cut off from power for more than a week was unacceptable. You are absolutely right, and that is why the Secretary of State made an announcement on it right away, and why Ofgem did its own report into it. I will ask my official Mark Prouse to add a bit more detail on other measures that we are taking on the resilience side.

Mark Prouse: I think resilience is captured in the Bill, as the Minister said—there is the future system operator, for example. The outcome-based legislation is the right approach; otherwise, we would have to legislate every new risk that emerges. Underneath that legislation is the regulator Ofgem, in the case of gas and electricity, which has regulations for the sector on resilience, on how much disruption can be absorbed into the system and on how quickly response occurs. That process is continually updated in light of lessons learned from events. In the same way that BEIS reported back to the Minister on Storm Arwen, Ofgem looked at what punitive action may or may not need to be taken against the sector to see improvements in the future. At that level, there are

resilience requirements in a very similar way to those being delivered in the water sector as we move forward.

Q88 Lord Snape: Following my colleague Baroness Neville-Jones on the question of resilience as far as Ministers are concerned, the NIC has called for regulators to require operators to develop long-term resilience strategies. Is that sensible? Are you supportive of this? If not, why not?

Greg Hands MP: Which operators in which sectors?

Lord Snape: Regulators across the sectors that we are discussing at the moment.

Roger Hargreaves: We talk to the NIC quite a bit about its recommendations, and we accepted its judgment that we needed to have longer-term planning for those sectors and their own resilience. We also accepted its recommendations for stress testing overseen by regulators to make sure that the resilience standards we set were met by operators. We rejected the long-term strategy recommendation, but it was more a case of “not now” than “no”, because we wanted them to prioritise the work on the development of some of their shorter-run capabilities and the stress testing of those. Our expectation is that we will move on to the other recommendations as soon as we are able to prioritise them.

Lord Snape: If you are not supportive of overall resilience strategies, is it your view that CNI operators are currently doing enough to adapt to climate change, despite findings to the contrary by the independent Climate Change Committee? You seem to be at odds with its findings.

Roger Hargreaves: I do not think we disagree that there are benefits to enhancing the resilience. In pretty much any sector we deal with a full range of risks. There is a matter of exercising choices and prioritising. We see from our own risk assessments that the range of risks that we deal with in climate change—the spread and the potential impact—are shifting in a way that means that we need to do more.

There is then a debate to be had about the rate of change and the extent of the change that we expect people to carry out. As things stand now, we use those assessments of risk. We use the judgments by the National Infrastructure Commission and the Climate Change Committee to inform what we expect of individual sectors and how that is reflected in their regulatory regimes.

We get the very common message now that we need to go further and faster on this, but I think that is reflected in the wider public debate as well. We have just had COP 26, and the Government as a whole gave the message that we need to go further and faster on these things, so I expect to see it reflected over time. Working through the detail of that is the challenge. It is quite easy to say, “Let’s do more”, but what we do, how we pay for it and how we prioritise that against other day-to-day and more immediate priorities is the point of debate.

Viscount Stansgate: In light of the Minister’s reply earlier and the

current period of hot weather that we are living through literally today and tomorrow, whose job will it be to take the initiative after this is over and look again at what the resilience in housing strategy will be to make our homes able to deal better with the increased heat and temperatures that we are suffering from today and undoubtedly in the future? Who will take the initiative to do that and to use what is happening today to discuss and consider a resilience strategy for housing?

Roger Hargreaves: Certainly from our perspective, there is some short-run work that we are doing on the risks this summer and over the next two years, say, but we see all departments now responding to the challenges of climate change and reflecting that in their policy agendas. The national adaptation plan and the climate change risk assessment are the documents that set out the challenges and the way we respond to that and cover the potential impact on a whole range of different fronts, but the risk described in those documents and the responses to them are very long-duration responses. Therefore, they are policy responses rather than the operational crisis management work that we do.

Steve Double MP: As mentioned earlier, Defra has a co-ordinating role for adaptation for climate change, mainly because about half the risks sit in Defra, but it is down to each department to manage the risk in their own department. Minister Hands has been laying out the way in which BEIS is responding to the risks in that department, and that is happening in every department. You mentioned housing. It will be down to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to manage that risk and to have policies that respond to the growing risk that we see in the housing sector.

Baroness Neville-Jones: I want to pursue Viscount Stansgate's question, which is about who would take the initiative. We have lots of departments, lots of interdependencies. Mr Hargreaves's answer to the question suggested that CCS would have something to do with this, which suggests the Cabinet Office, which is very often the department where you might expect an initiative to be taken to look at outcomes from this particular weather crisis and to see what needs to be learned. I think what we were after is where the responsibility would land for actually doing something, actually making sure that there is the opportunity to learn from this and not waste a good crisis.

Robert Mason: On Viscount Stansgate's specific question about housing, it will be the housing department, and it has already responded—

Baroness Neville-Jones: Each department would have its own sphere.

Robert Mason: The housing department owns the risk on overheating in buildings. BEIS, Minister Hands' department, owns the retrofitting of buildings and energy efficiency. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities has already changed the building regulations to have an overheating regulation that will come into force very shortly. For future buildings, builders must take into account the fact that we will be living in a very different world. Unfortunately, most of the houses we

live in and will be living in this century have already been built, so it deals with a future problem, but we need to think about how we adapt the houses that most people will be living in.

Lord Snape: I am sorry to labour this point, but are the Government minded to legislate to ensure higher and more consistent standards across all infrastructure sectors rather than, as seems to be the case, housing being a matter for the housing department. We understood earlier that the fact that they can run trains on one line and not on another is somebody else's responsibility—"Who is in charge of the clattering train?" to quote for those of us old enough to remember John Junor in the *Sunday Express*. Is there someone co-ordinating the whole business so that we can act uniformly rather than leaving it to individual departments?

Steve Double MP: As I said, I think Defra has the co-ordinating role in making sure that we are responding to the current risks that have been laid out before us. I think it has to be left to individual departments to come up with the right policies in their departments. I do not see how I, in co-ordinating this, could micromanage every department by telling them what they need to do. It has to be down to the departments to do that.

The Chair: Are you telling us that Defra owns the interdependencies?

Steve Double MP: Yes.

Robert Mason: And the writing of the programme.

Baroness Neville-Jones: That is very helpful. That is what we are trying to get at.

Q89 **Lord Dannatt:** You have touched on this slightly. We know that we are all expecting the resilience strategy to be published soon. We will come back to when "soon" might be in a moment, but with regard to its content—this is really a question for Mr Hargreaves—can we expect ambitious actions to be set out on things like climate adaptation and CNI resilience?

Roger Hargreaves: On the question of the timing of publication, when the Government published the integrated review they committed to issuing the resilience strategy this summer. We have been intending to do so, but broader political events mean that there will be no new policy announcements until a new Prime Minister arrives. However, the work has been done and we anticipate that to be an early deliverable for a new Administration. That is a context issue rather than a production of the strategy issue.

The strategy itself is intended to be framing. It sets out broad principles and the generic frameworks that support the tackling of all risks. It will be ambitious, with greater openness about risk and more action on prevention rather than simply waiting for emergencies to occur and curing the problem instead of prevention. It will also be ambitious in its

whole of society approach, recognising that it is not simply about government getting everyone out of a hole when there is an emergency, but about everyone acting in concert to prevent and deal with emergencies when they happen.

The detail about individual risks will be contained in strategies that relate to those risks. More than 100 different risks are identified in the national security risk assessment. The energy security strategy, the national food strategy, the net zero strategy and the national adaptation plan set out the steps being taken to deal with individual risks. Each of those things will be set out in a strategy that is 100 pages long. If we dealt with each of them in the resilience strategy, we would be delivering a 10,000 page resilience strategy, and much as I as an official might enjoy that, not everyone is as ardent a reader of my drafting as they might be. It frames it, and within that framing and with that intent and ambition, there is delivery of specific plans for particular risks. That flows from the departments that own those risks.

Lord Dannatt: You have just made a very important point, but it gets back to the previous discussion. If a wide range of risks are being managed by several departments, surely there is no overall co-ordinating role? If that is broadly accepted in principle, is that not the function of the Cabinet Office? Is this not a question that we should be putting to Mr Ellis, were he not detained in the Chamber or wherever else he is?

Roger Hargreaves: I am sure Mr Ellis would give the same answer that I can give, which is that we do have a co-ordinating role. One of the most important things we do is generate the national security risk assessment. That identifies the full range of risks that we face as a country, and it offers a prioritisation for those risks because it describes the likelihood and the impact of those risks. That in turn is used to prioritise resourcing across government. It is used by departments to understand the biggest risks they face and it offers a completeness about the risk picture, so things should not fall between the gaps. It also allows us in the Cabinet Office to co-ordinate, where that is relevant.

To give two examples, it allows us to co-ordinate the development of capabilities. You might have two different events that each generate mass casualties. There is no point in having two separate mass casualty plans. You need a single mass casualty plan that can be shared between departments. It also helps us on the short run, because we can look at a summer and an autumn with plenty of risks, as we face now, and that provides a platform that allows us to assess how those risks intersect and to identify concurrency and compounding effects. We play a co-ordinating role on the basis of that work, and we are quite interventionist with departments in helping them to manage those risks, particularly where there is overlap.

Lord Dannatt: Thank you. I will not press you any further on that. We look forward at some point later in the summer, when there is a new Prime Minister in place, to the unveiling of what I am sure will be a gripping document, the resilience strategy. Thank you. I will leave it

there.

The Chair: What is the forum for the ministerial debate about which climate risks are to be prioritised?

Robert Mason: The ministerial forum is the Climate Action Implementation committee, or CAI. The climate action strategy sits above climate action implementation and will take the nascent national adaptation programme to CAI.

Greg Hands MP: We had a CAI meeting last week, so very recently. Can I give my apologies? I have to take a statutory instrument through in a different committee room, if I may. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you for coming. We appreciate it. Is your official going to stay?

Mark Prouse: I was going to leave as well, but I can stay for a short while longer if the committee would prefer.

The Chair: If you would not mind, that might be helpful. I am guessing that you do not need him.

Greg Hands MP: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr Mason, you were speaking a moment ago, and you indicated that Defra is responsible for interdependencies. How many people in Defra are working specifically on interdependencies?

Robert Mason: We are responsible for picking out the interdependencies. If there was an interdependency between, say, digital communications and energy, that would be the responsibility of DCMS and BEIS to sort out. As part of our work, inevitably when the Climate Change Committee brings evidence and says that there are risks, we look at them as individual risks. We have been quite successful in getting individual risk owners for all those risks and for departments to take responsibility. Who deals with something that is not always clear-cut? We have got through that part of it.

Analysing the information we are getting from departments about their risks is the next work phase of developing the national adaptation programme. Inevitably, there will be issues which risk owners looking at just their risk have identified, but those risk owners will not necessarily have looked at other risks. My team of 17 is the Defra resource to look at that. We have access to the Climate Change Committee adaptation experts and to academic experts, but the core team is my team in Defra.

Q90 **Baroness Hodgson of Abinger:** We are talking about risks, but when does a risk become a crisis? I can understand what you are saying about the compounding of risks, but if one takes the present situation today, it is warmer than usual but it is not unique. There are other countries in Europe that have had this regularly. I cannot remember who uses the word "crisis". Do we really think this is a crisis? I was in a meeting this

morning with a whole load of Afghan women who said, "We don't know what the fuss is about. It's 50 degrees in Kabul and we've always lived perfectly well with this". Is there a definition of when a risk becomes a crisis, or of when it just stays as a risk and we cannot cope?

Roger Hargreaves: We have definitions that support our work on the national security risk assessment. When it comes to crisis, we are interested in the issues that arise. They are acute by nature—they have significant impacts on human welfare or economic or social impacts. The nature of the present event is relatively high risk. We know from previous heat waves that there are material numbers of excess deaths.

The Paris heat wave in 2003, for example, led to 15,000 excess deaths. Heat waves in the UK in the last five years have led to deaths in the hundreds, close to the thousands. These are material events, and heat of this kind is extreme and puts a great deal of pressure on vulnerable sections of the community, so we would definitely regard this as an acute situation that benefits from clear government action.

To illustrate it and to draw out some of the differences between the kind of longer-term risk assessment that Defra is doing in the climate change risk assessment and associated adaptation and the kind of risk we deal with, we are looking at storms, heat waves and other excess temperature events such as cold weather, coastal flooding and surface water flooding. The Defra list, which is considerably longer term in nature, is looking at things like soil health, hydro-electric performance, FABRICA buildings—those kinds of topics.

You can probably see from those options the difference in character. We are far more interested in the acute events that spin up quickly and, therefore, in delivering an active government response to them. The risks that sit in the climate change risk assessment, stewarded by Defra, are much longer term in nature and require a policy response rather than an operational response.

Baroness Hodgson of Abinger: Do you ever ask equivalents in countries like Spain and Italy that have regularly had these kind of temperatures how they deal with the particular risks that you are identifying?

Roger Hargreaves: Yes, we have quite a lot of bilateral and multilateral contact on these different risks. It is true that all countries essentially have a social and economic fabric that is designed to deal with the prevailing conditions. On your Afghan example, I do not know how they cope with heavy snow and ice for protracted periods, but they may cope with it less well than the Norwegians do. We always say, "We've had an inch of snow and London has ground to a halt. You don't get this in Oslo". However, if 10 million people tried to commute into Oslo in the space of an hour on a Monday morning, that would lead to chaos.

Everyone is set up to deal with the prevailing conditions and they manage their risks accordingly. The challenge here is how we adapt over time to

deal with a shifting risk landscape. Individual events like this will necessarily be acute. It will always be difficult when we have a red weather event. We can put all the effort in the world into preparedness, but if we face extreme cold or high winds and storms, or major coastal flooding or extreme periods of heat, it will always be difficult and require a crisis response, because you are departing significantly from the norm.

Q91 **Baroness Hodgson of Abinger:** When did a Defra Minister last meet the Minister for the Cabinet Office to discuss climate adaptation on CNI specifically?

Steve Double MP: I do not know the answer to that, because I have only been in post a week.

Robert Mason: I do not know the answer to that either. I would have to check and get back to you. We have certainly discussed it at official level with Cabinet Office colleagues, but I do not recall a Defra Minister speaking directly to a Cabinet Office Minister about this.

Of course, in the context of the Cabinet Committee CAI, Cabinet Office Ministers and Defra Ministers will be there. That would be the normal venue for cross-government discussion of these risks. Minister Double's predecessor had started a round of bilateral meetings with risk-owning departments, and I think you are about to continue doing those. The Cabinet Office does not own any of those risks. The Treasury own risks, the Foreign Office owns risks. There are 13 departments that own one or more of the 61 risks. It is important that Ministers in those departments understand that they own those risks and that these things will continue over time. There is more likelihood of things going wrong in their area—the things that we have just been talking about—because of the change in climate, and they need to prepare for it, so those meetings will continue. The proper forum for that is the Cabinet Committee.

Baroness Hodgson of Abinger: Would COBR ever include that type of Minister?

Robert Mason: Those Ministers may meet in a different form as COBR, depending on the subject, but COBR is specifically the emergency committee. There is a difference between weather and climate. It is something that is happening now rather than something that is happening over time. Weather is unpredictable; climate is predictable. These predictable changes, which have been predicted and will change our lives across all sectors, will happen, but the immediate flashpoints caused by the change in climate will be more of the risks that we have just heard about. That will happen more frequently, and with red events in all sectors the likelihood of COBR meetings to discuss those risks will become greater. They will be weather events rather than climate events.

Q92 **Darren Jones:** Resilience to climate change is a top tier priority. We have been speaking for over an hour and I still do not know who has overall responsibility for it. I understand why departments will own their own risks, but we have the Defra Secretary responsible for

interdependencies, the Cabinet Office Minister responsible for convening, and the Climate Adaptation Implementation committee responsible for reporting, which is chaired by Alok Sharma, so there are three different Ministers there.

I want you to put yourself in this perspective. It is 6 September. The new Prime Minister says, "Climate resilience is a really important issue for this country. I want to know how resilient our critical national infrastructure is. Please summon the Minister who's going to brief me on this issue". I suspect, Mr Hargreaves, that you might get the call from Downing Street in the Cabinet Office. Who are you going to send?

Roger Hargreaves: It will probably be the Minister from the Cabinet Office and the Minister from Defra. There are two things here. To separate them out, there is the management of short-run risk—national security risks, as we define them, so over the next two to three years. Those are risks that materialise as acute events. They are managed in the civil contingency system, and the Minister for the Cabinet Office and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster oversee that system. They take responsibility for its effective operation, but it is a service provider to government as a whole.

There is then a broader question about how we are adapting to deal with climate change over time—essentially, the policy response. That is the responsibility of individual departments in respect of their own areas, but it is co-ordinated by Defra. So one is an operational response to events and one is a policy co-ordination effort. The former is Cabinet Office and the latter is Defra.

Darren Jones: The Defra Minister and the Cabinet Office Minister are jointly accountable. I am, then, amazed that the Cabinet Office Minister wrote to this committee to say that he could not answer our questions on climate resilience. Would he say the same to the next Prime Minister?

Roger Hargreaves: You would have to ask him.

Q93 **Darren Jones:** It is remarkable, is it not? Moving on to regulators, Mr Hargreaves, you have talked about horizontal regulation. There are other policy areas in the UK where regulators work together. We have the Digital Regulation Cooperation Forum, the Competition and Markets Authority, Ofcom and a number of other regulators who recognise that they have a shared responsibility for digital regulation. They meet to talk about what each of them is doing and to highlight risks where there are gaps. Why is that not happening for climate resilience in critical infrastructure?

Roger Hargreaves: From our perspective, we would think about that question not just in terms of climate resilience but in terms of all resilience and management of risk. As I said, we think that we should be more ambitious in creating the effect of horizontal regulation—everyone meeting the same kind of standards on resilience. We do not think we should have the Australian model, which is a separate regulatory

framework for resilience.⁵ We think it should be done in the sector by sector regulatory frameworks.

One of the ways in which I expect that we will foster that collective raising of standards to what we expect will be precisely that kind of co-operation between regulators. But it is a gap at the moment, and that is one of the reasons why we are addressing it.

Darren Jones: I am not suggesting anything particularly complicated. I am just suggesting that the Minister responsible, whether it is Defra or the Cabinet Office, if they really care about resilience, might call the regulators together and have a meeting about it. Has that ever happened?

Roger Hargreaves: No, not as a single regulatory forum to look at risk, but there is a lot of co-operation with regulators on individual risks.

Q94 **Darren Jones:** Understood. Thank you. Mr Prouse, I want to come to you on the Energy Security Bill. It is a shame that the Minister has had to leave, but it is understandable. The Minister suggested to this committee that resilience was an important issue to the department and that it was in the Bill, but I have just looked at this. There are 47 mentions of resilience and all of them relate to fuel supplies, which as you all know—I scrutinised the Bill—was the incorporation of the draft Downstream Oil Resilience Bill into the Energy Security Bill. If resilience is really a priority for the department, would it not be on the face of the Bill beyond just the Bill that had already been scrutinised?

Mark Prouse: I think, as the Minister explained earlier, that resilience is captured in the legislative framework for the future system operator, so I do not think that resilience needs to be cited in the meat of a Bill that is setting out that framework. The implementation of the future system operator is where you would expect to see resilience, because we want to see resilience measures delivered in that regulatory framework, alongside Ofgem, so I think that is a reasonable position for us to be in. As you said, you scrutinised the fuel measures in your committee and, as you know, there is no regulatory framework there, so that is the gap which the Bill is filling for energy security.

Darren Jones: On core fuel and the future systems operator, is that job done?

Mark Prouse: Well, once core fuel is delivered we will need to look at whether there are appropriate SIs that need to be used to implement. The intent of that as you—

Darren Jones: I mean broader resilience of the energy system. Is there nothing else to be done? Is that why it is not in the Bill?

Mark Prouse: I certainly do not think we can ever say there is nothing else to be done. This is a continual learning process, and we are doing—

⁵ See footnote 3.

Darren Jones: What is next?

Mark Prouse: You are establishing the FSA. The legislation just establishes the framework for implementing that.

Darren Jones: What is next?

Mark Prouse: I think it is part of the ongoing work to look at risks across the piece. I think it would be foolish of me to commit to a specific risk here in this committee. We do not know what will materialise by the time that legislation has been delivered.

Q95 **Darren Jones:** You could have done without the Minister. We would have been happy for you to do so, but I understand.

Mr Hargreaves, my final question is to you. The critical national infrastructure knowledge base was due to be published this summer. Is that still happening?

Roger Hargreaves: The knowledge base is a tool that we have built to allow us to assess the operation of CNI systems and the interplay between those systems.⁶ It is a very useful tool. We have largely completed the work on it, so we are increasingly able to use it in our assessment of the impact of risks on the CNI.

Darren Jones: I think we were expecting it to be launched. Has it been launched?

Roger Hargreaves: We are using it internally within government. It contains a lot of information that is sensitive.

Darren Jones: Will there be a public aspect to the knowledge base?

Roger Hargreaves: We have referred to this with our public documents, but we are not giving public access to it because it is a sensitive system that holds information about the performance of CNI sectors.⁷

Q96 **Baroness Crawley:** If we may, we will move from our concerns about a lack of central oversight of the national picture to the local picture. I want to talk about local resilience forums. The Government's recent review of the Civil Contingencies Act found that funding is a barrier to local resilience forums and that limiting resources impact on their ability to collaborate effectively. The Government are saying this. We understand that the Government have a budget over three years of £7.5 million to support LRFs. Do we think that is enough? What has been the impact of this funding so far? How do the Government see local resilience forums in the future as we have more of these emergencies through climate change? Do you think they are well enough established to lead on

⁶ Note by witness: The Knowledge Base is a tool to allow Departments to visualise CNI systems and the interplay between those systems. It does not allow the Government to assess the operation of CNI systems, in terms of performance.

⁷ Note by witness: The Knowledge Base does not hold information on the performance of CNI sectors. It holds information about the interdependencies between CNI sectors.

emergency planning for those extreme events?

Roger Hargreaves: Local resilience forums are essentially organisations that exist to convene and discuss the interests of the different local responders that have statutory obligations under the Civil Contingencies Act. They are very well established. They have been in place in their present form for almost two decades, although in some instances they have existed in a similar form for much longer than that. Their work starts with an assessment of local risk. That is informed by our national security risk assessment. We make it available to them and they reflect on the local manifestation of that—the local circumstances and so forth.

There was a question about their effectiveness and whether they were adequately resourced to take on their convening role. The £7.5 million figure was the funding provided to LRFs in England as a one-year trial.⁸ Some £22 million has been made available for the next three years to allow that to continue, because it was found to be helpful in allowing LRFs to perform the functions of convening, co-ordinating and amplifying their work on risk and so forth, as was necessary, as well as their engagement with the national level. That engagement with the national level is particularly important for the kind of risks that you describe.

LRFs are there in the first instance to manage local risks as they occur, but the expression I would use is that all emergencies are local and only some emergencies are national, but where we have national emergencies the local response is the building block of what we do. They can play a fuller part because of the funding we have made available.

Where we have the larger-scale national risks, what tends to happen is planning nationally with an LRF component. Take, for example, a climate change-related risk such as wide area flooding. There is national planning, co-ordinated by the Environment Agency, which is then cascaded into local plans through Environment Agency participation in LRFs, which in turn is supported by the funding that we have made available.

Baroness Crawley: Thank you. That is very clear. Why do you think that, in his evidence, Stuart Marshall from Cleveland LRF told us that there is no clear responsibility? He seemed to come back to this again and again in answer to nearly all our questions. There is no clear responsibility for medium and long-term climate adaptation. We know that they are long established, we know that they respond to immediate emergencies, but who is responsible at government level to ensure that CNI critical national infrastructure in Cleveland is protected from climate change in the medium and long term? Which part of government is ensuring that this actually works? Is it Defra? Is it the Cabinet Office and Defra? Is it BEIS and the Cabinet Office and Defra? Who is responsible when it comes to local resilience forums? I do not mean for the

⁸ Note by witness: The £7.5million figure was in addition to the usual funding received by LRFs for activities undertaken under the CCA, which is provided through respective agencies such as the police, fire and local authorities.

immediate emergency—we know the set-up there—but for medium and long-term climate change events.

Steve Double MP: Again, it is important to differentiate between the emergency response and the longer-term adaptation programme. It is right to say that we recognise the importance of local involvement in these decisions, because climate change will impact different parts of the country differently. So it is absolutely vital that we have local authorities engaged in that process to make sure that the adaptations being looked at in their location are the right ones for the way it will impact that area.

As I said, I have only just picked this up, but I was very interested to note that in 2011 Defra set up the Local Adaptation Advisory Panel, which is the forum by which we engage with local authorities to look at the need for adaptation to manage the risks in their localities and is the right approach. I am pleased that there is that forum where Defra is engaging with local authorities on adaptations for the future.

Q97 **Baroness Neville-Jones:** Do you think that when it is published the resilience strategy will give the LRFs a clearer mandate? We heard quite a lot of evidence from them about a lack of confidence in where the boundaries lay and the extent of their responsibilities and their capacity to carry them out. Does the resilience strategy deal with this rather key relationship between central and local resilience forums, and make it quite clear who does what?

Roger Hargreaves: Yes. Local resilience forums are a creature of a wider statutory framework that spells out the roles for local responders. In that sense, there is already clear associated regulation and guidance that spells out, and has spelt out very effectively for 20 years, what people are responsible for at the local level.

The Chair: Are they co-ordinating the response now to this heat wave?

Roger Hargreaves: LRFs? Yes, absolutely. I think there have been 30-plus meetings of LRFs in the affected areas. They have also all been attended by representatives of central government as liaison officers. That is very typical of emergencies as they arise.

Baroness Neville-Jones: We did hear a rather different story from them about lack of clarity and lack of information, too. They sometimes felt underinformed about—

Roger Hargreaves: Sorry, that is a slightly different point.

Baroness Neville-Jones: It is a slightly different point.

Roger Hargreaves: One of the things that we will address in the strategy is precisely this question of how the local level and the central level work together. Some of that is about clarifying roles and responsibilities inside central government, so the local level can see very clearly into the system and understand where they should be engaging. Some of it is about the management and interface—things like the

transfer of information about risk in a timely fashion so that people are able to respond. There is a point about the resources that are available in order for the local level to receive the information as it comes in. But, as I have mentioned, we have already made more funding available, and that is one of the key points of purpose.

There is also a wider cultural point, which came up in the context of the pandemic. Does local government trust central government? Does central government trust local government? This issue is not limited solely to resilience but is one of the cultural points that we have been working to address, for example through the very significant strengthening of the resource in the Department for Levelling Up. Is capacity there to develop a better working relationship at the local level? Now, we have a resilience team there with staff who are out and about in local resilience forums engaging with responders and building a relationship of trust. That is work in progress. I do not dispute that at all, but we have put the building blocks in place administratively and financially to try to make that happen. We will reinforce that message in the resilience strategy, particularly the point about the transfer of information and openness.

Q98 **Baroness Neville-Jones:** That is good news. When it comes forward, will the resilience strategy have money attached to it?

Roger Hargreaves: There will not be new money attached to it. Very substantial amounts of money are already spent by government on the fullest range of national security risks, and resilience is part of that. A lot of what we determine is necessary in our work on the resilience strategy is more about how people approach their work—for example, the extent to which we are open about risk and use risk as a platform to drive the right behaviours.

There is still a legacy in resilience work of its original home as part of a broader civil defence and national security community, and people can be reluctant to share information. The nature of civil emergencies means that that kind of free sharing of information is both necessary and easier, because there is less controlled information in that environment. How transparent we are about risk, how we share it and how we then use it to communicate not just in the public sector but with partner organisations like CNI operators and with the public at large is the really important change. That is not about spending big bucks but about the way in which people perform their existing functions.

There are questions about how we prioritise the money we spend and whether we can do that better for the risks we have. But it is not the case that we do not spend anything on resilience and that we need to spend lots more to get ourselves into shape. It is more about the repurposing of the very significant existing resources that we commit to resilience.

Q99 **Lord Dannatt:** Would you agree with me, Mr Hargreaves, that maybe the LRFs, in following through their strategy requirements, do not bring in the third sector, the charity sector, sufficiently and that there is quite a considerable resource there? We have worked together on this for a

couple of years. During the coronavirus pandemic the charity sector brought a lot to the party, and the better performing LRFs were the ones that embraced the charity sector as opposed to captured it at arm's length. Is that a fair comment, and can we go further in that direction?

Roger Hargreaves: Yes, I think there is a broad point there about what we invest in resilience and the conclusion that we have reached in the context of the resilience strategy, which is that this is not simply about taxpayer-funded investment in resilience capabilities but about everyone understanding that they have a part to play. The Government spend on resilience, but so do key private sector providers of services to the public, and individual communities and individuals can spend their own money on resilience. In many countries, they are expected to or choose to.

The voluntary sector is part of that theme. In some local resilience forum areas, we see people leverage the voluntary sector and get an awful lot from that capacity; in other areas, less so. So the resilience strategy will speak about the importance of involving the voluntary sector and of leveraging it, and we will reflect that in the standards we set that people are measured against, but also in the best practice that we promulgate. The way to get people using the voluntary sector is for them to see how much other areas get from it, because they will want some of the same.

Lord Dannatt: The basic point, I think, is that we do best when the private, public and charitable sectors work together, and they work together when someone convenes them. I think that is a function of the LRF locally. The good LRFs do that and the weak LRFs do not.

Q100 **Viscount Stansgate:** Are there local resilience forums meeting now? If so, how do you know about them and how do they communicate to you the result of their discussions, some of which may be discussing events of this week?

Roger Hargreaves: There is a resilience team inside the Department for Levelling Up. One of its responsibilities is to liaise with local resilience forums and to be present at their meetings, and at the meetings of police strategic co-ordinating groups,⁹ which deal with more acute emergencies. They provide a perspective on what the Government are trying to achieve and bring information back to the centre of government.

Typically, in a COBR meeting or a similar meeting, we will get reports from the Department for Levelling Up on what is happening in local areas. That is quite a big improvement in the transmission mechanism from where it was, say, 10 years ago, when we had quite well developed government liaison functions—for example, for a counterterrorism incident, a Home Office liaison officer would go and deal with that incident. This is a system that is in continuous contact with the local level and aims to feed information down and pull information back up.

⁹ Note by witness: Strategic Coordinating Groups are usually chaired by the police, but can be chaired by other senior representatives from other organisations, where appropriate.

Viscount Stansgate: Who decides whether it is important enough to be reported to the Department for Levelling Up and to go on that bit further and reach you in the Cabinet Office?

Roger Hargreaves: Probably the simplest way to think of it is that the Department for Levelling Up operates as an arm of our work. We talk to it continuously about what it is hearing from the local level. We may commission the department to do specific things, but we work hand in glove with it and it understands that a very important part of its role is to feed through the perspective of what is happening at the local level. Clearly, a lot happens at the local level that does not need to be lifted to the national level, but it is our key intelligence-gathering asset.

Q101 **Baroness Neville-Jones:** I will go back to the question about money, if you do not mind. I think it is a working assumption of this committee that, when it comes forward, the resilience strategy is designed to and will lead to greater levels of resilience against climate change and more effective adaptation. It seems to me that it is absolutely inevitable that that will cost money somewhere, including for operators and not just for the taxpayer. Is there not a risk in all of that that your costs will be passed on to consumers or, if the operators are required to bear them, that they will possibly not invest?

There is a big issue there of who is going to put the money in. It would be helpful to know what you regard the Government's role as being in the whole question of ensuring that there is sufficient investment. The Environment Agency has called on the Treasury to undertake a review of the economics of climate adaptation to bring about a domestic strategy that is coherent and carries weight and confidence. What is your thinking on the whole question of how you divide up the financial load?

Roger Hargreaves: It is putting a number on what we spend on resilience at large or on aspects of it, like climate change resilience. We have done some work on that, but in all honesty it was tricky to do, because what is resilience? What is general policy development? What is an asset intended for resilience purposes versus other activities? It is very hard to disaggregate.

We can identify what we spend on the core systems of resilience—the kind of national resilience framework, the emergency planners in local authorities, or equipment designed to deal with the most extreme end of emergencies but without a general purpose—but there is plenty of other stuff. There are huge amounts of other investment in broader policy initiatives. None of the investment that we make in preventing and adapting to climate change would be included in the numbers that I collect on what we spend on resilience, but it clearly has a resilience benefit. All of what we spend on the NHS has a resilience benefit.

Other activities, such as a national obesity strategy, have huge public health benefits and diminish the impact of certain kinds of emergencies. Disentangling all that is really tricky, almost not meaningful. The question that we have looked at is: is enough being spent on those core resilience

functions and the core resilience system for the management of preparedness for particular risks?

Baroness Neville-Jones: By whom?

Roger Hargreaves: By the Government, but in the context of the resilience strategy we have also looked at what partner organisations spend. It is true that if you look at critical national infrastructure, the regulatory requirements that exist see operators spend a huge amount on resilience to meet their regulatory requirements. As we add to those regulatory requirements, the amount they have to spend will increase further. We have also looked at what the public should spend on resilience. That is a tricky topic, because there are lots of members of the public who struggle to afford the basics in life and are not going to go off and buy a generator or a month's supply of bottled water, but there are other people who do want to spend on their own resilience, and there is a recognition on our part that other countries are far less nervous about asking the public to do more.

I think our expectation, and one of our guiding thoughts on the resilience strategy, is that as a country collectively we need to invest more in resilience. Some of that is about what we spend in the public sector. As I say, it is quite difficult to disentangle, although targeted investments are necessary, such as what we have done with LRFs. Some of it is about increasing the load on regulated sectors where appropriate in respect of the resilience demands, which will see them spend more. Some of that is creating a framework, so that anyone else who wants to invest understands where the priorities should be against a common set of risks and against a set of advice for how they might best—

Baroness Neville-Jones: Do you think you will emerge with some kind of general philosophy about where the different loads lie? We do not have the horizontal approach, we have sectors, and it seems to me that the danger is that you will do it differently in each sector and there will be no apparent logic to it and, indeed, that in the end you will not end up with anything like as effective an outcome.

Roger Hargreaves: The answer is that the load should lie more evenly across the different sectors. I talked before about moving away from the sort of parent-child relationship between the Government and everyone else whereby something has gone wrong, the Government fix problem, the Government spend the money. There has to be a greater expectation that organisations and communities are more resilient in their own right and therefore that the impacts of emergencies are diminished as a consequence. There is still a role for the Government in dealing with emergencies, because those events are acute and people need support, but the more we can spread the load, prevent risks materialising, expect a degree of resilience across key public service providers, whether in the public sector or the private sector, and encourage the public to be more resilient, the easier that task of responding to acute events is and the more we can target help towards those who need it most.

The Chair: Thank you very much everybody, particularly for your patience on a day like this. Thank you in particular, Minister. I know it is part of one's responsibilities to step in no matter what, but we are grateful to you. Thank you very much, all of you.