



Environmental Audit Committee

Oral evidence: Prospects for UNFCCC COP28, HC 185

Wednesday 8 November 2023

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Members present: Philip Dunne (Chair); Duncan Baker; Barry Gardiner; James Gray; Clive Lewis; Caroline Lucas; Jerome Mayhew; Anna McMorrin; Dr Matthew Offord.

Science, Innovation and Technology Committee member present: Greg Clark.

Energy Security and Net Zero Committee member present: Lloyd Russell-Moyle.

Questions 1 - 45

Witnesses

I: Rt Hon Graham Stuart MP, Minister of State (Minister for Energy Security and Net Zero), Department for Energy Security and Net Zero; and Alison Campbell OBE, UK Lead Climate Negotiator and Deputy Director of International Climate Negotiations and Engagement, Department for Energy Security and Net Zero.



Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Rt Hon Graham Stuart MP and Alison Campbell OBE.

Q1 **Chair:** Welcome to the Environmental Audit Committee. We are very pleased to have a single panel session today with the Minister, the right hon. Graham Stuart, to discuss preparations for COP28. I am particularly pleased to welcome the Chair of the Science, Innovation and Technology Committee, Greg Clark, and a member of the Energy Security and Net Zero Committee, Lloyd Russell-Moyle. You are very welcome to join us today. We have a very full attendance to hear the pearls of wisdom from the Minister. Perhaps you could start by introducing Alison Campbell, your official.

Graham Stuart: Alison is our lead negotiator, and was the deputy last year. She was with me last week when we were at pre-COP meetings in Abu Dhabi. I am responsible for the negotiations and Alison leads our team in conducting them.

Q2 **Chair:** Terrific. Thank you. I should also start by thanking your Department and you in particular for facilitating the presence of perhaps a larger parliamentary delegation from this House than has been customary at COPs. Those of us who are going are very grateful to you for helping with that.

To set the scene, some of us have just come from a meeting with your Secretary of State, who indicated that the UK priorities for COP28 have been discussed and, I think, have been agreed within Government. Could you tell us what they are?

Graham Stuart: Certainly. Is it worth giving you a brief context beforehand? I do not really need to say it to any members of this Committee, but the science is becoming ever more stark. The first Select Committee I joined after being elected in 2005 was the Environmental Audit Committee, and I remember going to the Montreal COP in 2005. I have never forgotten that. I pushed my nose against the glass as a parliamentarian but otherwise was not officially accredited and was not engaged with, even though parliamentarians create the regulatory system and to some extent create the political weather. One of the things I did when I got this job was to reach out immediately to the presidency and talk to them about my experience. There is a day in which parliamentarians are very much being included. GLOBE, with which I was involved and Barry has been involved, is hosting a pavilion for parliamentarians. We are working with the UNFCCC as I would like to see parliamentarians not only accredited as part of the British delegation, which has happened I think for the first time this year—as you rightly say at my behest—but also having an official accreditation through the UNFCCC.

I won't go on too much about the science. Clearly, the big point is the IPCC says that we have to peak by 2025 and on 2019 levels globally cut



emissions on that basis by 43% by 2030. Given that there are quite a lot of large emitters who are growing their emissions rather than cutting them, that puts into perspective the nature of the challenge, especially if you look at the UK. Of all the major economies on Earth, it has cut its emissions more than any other: 48%, and that is 48% since 1990—33 years—yet the world needs to cut by 43% on 2019 levels by 2030, with many people going in the opposite direction. Anyway, that is the context.

The UK has identified and agreed five priorities at COP28: ambitious new commitments and action to keep 1.5° alive—the various required elements of that are obvious; securing a clean energy package, including clear commitments to move beyond fossil fuels; an outcome on finance that helps to deliver the trillions that are needed to accelerate the transition; building resilience to current and future climate impacts; and making progress towards protecting, restoring and sustainably managing nature.

Q3 **Chair:** Thank you. In relation to the priorities of the president-designate and the UN, if we take perhaps the most lively and topical issue at the moment—the status of fossil fuel exploration and extraction—the president has indicated that their priority is to phase down the use of fossil fuels, whereas the EU and I believe the UN are looking for phasing out. Where does the UK sit along that spectrum in the light of recent announcements for oil and gas licences in the North Sea?

Graham Stuart: We want to get there with the maximum ambition but, of course, what you have to remember is that there is nothing fundamentally wrong with oil and gas. It is the emissions from them that are the critical point. That is why what we want is the removal of the emissions from oil and gas to the maximum extent possible, but as this Committee will know better than most, even in 2050 we expect there to be some emissions that have to be netted off with negative ones. The reality is that the most decarbonised major economy on Earth, us, was reliant for 77% of its primary energy needs last year on oil and gas. There is no switch I can press to switch this off. We will be using oil and gas in decades to come. It is the emissions that we have to focus on. We also have to build a global coalition that can agree that. That is what we do with the negotiations and people have positions.

I do not know if I am allowed personal perspectives, but mine is that we have focused too much on supply when the key driver is demand. As long as your vehicles cannot move, your factories cannot work and your homes cannot be cooled or heated without oil and gas, someone will produce it and sell it, because without it civilisation will stop. Our focus has to be on driving that transition and recognising that it is a transition. As you highlighted, when I go out as the Minister, what I see here in the UK is an integrated energy system, companies that are involved in oil and gas in this country and which, for new investment and retention of those skills—engineering, subsea and the like—in this country, require oil and gas revenues precisely in order to invest in carbon capture and storage



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facilities, to invest in the early days of hydrogen. We have seen the same companies in the supply chain for offshore wind, floating, fixed bed and, indeed, companies involved in nascent technologies like tidal as well.

We do not want to be too simplistic about this and we want to make sure that we are tilting at the right enemy. The biggest challenge is for us to change the demand vectors. I do not think that oil and gas exploration and development is the driver; it is the demand that we have to focus on. That is where we have led as a country and we have plans, which we set out in March, in more detail than any other country on Earth as to how we are going to change our industries, our houses and then our—

Q4 Chair: I am going to cut you short because I think this will come up from others as well.

You have set out what the priorities are to us just now. Will you be making a ministerial statement either to the House orally or in written form in the coming days?

Graham Stuart: That is a very good point. It is an obvious question and I should be in a position to answer it. The answer, of course, is yes, as I think we always do.

Q5 Chair: We will look forward to that tomorrow. Is it your view, given what you said at the beginning, that the ambition to keep 1.5° alive, which was the mantra of COP26, is now dead and buried?

Graham Stuart: No, absolutely not. It is extremely challenging, but one of the things is to get the world to wake up to it. We used to talk about the negative impacts being in the future. I think there is little doubt now that we are seeing the negative impacts today. We are already seeing it in wildfires and increased negative events. That is at around 1.1°, so at 1.5° as a ceiling you could expect there to be more damage than there is today. Going beyond that really will be inconceivably expensive. From the Nick Stern report onwards, we have said, "If only we could get over the tragedy of the commons and look at this holistically." It makes no sense economically or any other way for the world not to find it within themselves to—

Q6 Chair: It remains the UK's target and ambition?

Graham Stuart: It is, absolutely. We want to keep 1.5° alive. It was one of the achievements of Glasgow—

Chair: I am sorry to keep interrupting you but I am very conscious that we have a lot of questions to get through and we need to keep to quite concise answers.

Q7 Caroline Lucas: I wanted to put a couple of other figures on the table in response to some of the figures that you used, Minister, which will not come as a surprise to you. You often talk about this 48% emissions reduction and, of course, when you use that figure you are talking about territorial emissions. I do think it is important that we recognise that if we



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outsource quite a lot of our manufacturing to countries like China it is not surprising if our production emissions go down. However, if we were to look at it in terms of imported emissions, then that emission reduction is more like 15% or 16%, which over a 30-year period is pretty slim. I do think it is important that we focus on the facts.

Another thing I know that you say is that we are decarbonising faster than any other country. In fact, if we look at emission cuts since 2015, Germany has outpaced us. There is a concern about complacency creeping in here.

My question is: you will know that a number of organisations, businesses and individuals, including the Climate Change Committee and the UN Climate Change Executive Secretary, have cast doubt on the UK's climate leadership recently. I wonder how you will answer those people who will look at some of the rollbacks that have happened with the Prime Minister's statements, with the new licensing Bill that was in the King's Speech yesterday. How are we going to persuade other countries that they should be making big cuts in emissions if the UK seems to be going in the opposite direction?

Graham Stuart: Thank you for those questions. Climate leadership does consist most of all on emissions and we have cut our emissions by more than any other major economy on Earth.

Caroline Lucas: Not since 2015, though.

Graham Stuart: You can pick different periods, and I welcome the fact that other countries are reducing emissions. We have reduced ours by 48%, the Germans by 44%, and I welcome that, but they are behind us. If you look at ambition to 2030, not only does the UK of all the major economies on Earth have the best record to date on the UNFCCC measures, as dictated by it, we also have the most ambitious 2030 NDC, which as you will be aware is 68%. Having cut emissions more than any other major economy on Earth and having the most ambitious plans with a history of delivery to 2030 of any major economy on Earth, I struggle to see how anyone could reasonably recognise us as other than a climate leader.

I hope that you do not take that as complacency because it is troubling, but it does mean—this is a challenge I would put to you—that if you really care about climate change, which is a global issue to which we are a less than 1% contributor, the last country you currently have to worry about is the UK. What we have to do is encourage others to get on a net zero pathway, as we are on. That is the focus. Giving the impression that somehow we are way off the path when we have met every single carbon budget to date—

Caroline Lucas: Can I interrupt because otherwise we will run out of time?

Graham Stuart: Please do.



Q8 Caroline Lucas: It is for us to ask the questions. I think that you will acknowledge that the head of the Climate Change Committee, the Government's own advisory committee, has expressed real concern about what they see as you doing U-turns on some of the pledges that have been made previously. As I said before, you also have the UN Climate Change Executive Secretary casting doubt on the UK's climate leadership. I put it to you again, parking for the moment our discussion about how much the Government or the UK have done in the past, there is a real concern right now that through the decisions we are making, we are sending a message to other countries that we are no longer climate leaders. It is not just me saying this; it is the Climate Change Committee, the UN, a whole lot of businesses. How are you going to persuade them on what you are doing? You talked about the figure on the NDC and we have a question on that coming up, but you will know that we are not on track in terms of the policies to deliver that NDC. Targets are cheap; it is the delivery that matters. How will we persuade countries?

Graham Stuart: As I say, we have met every single carbon budget to date. We have cut more than anybody else and we have the most ambitious plans—

Caroline Lucas: But looking forward?

Graham Stuart: —going forward and a track record of meeting our aims. As to the specific points, what we have also been very successful on is creating and maintaining political support for this. On the Prime Minister's changes that you referenced, I have a lot of off-grid constituents in rural east Yorkshire who were worried about the removal of their heating system, to be replaced with technology they were not convinced would necessarily work and that they were sure they could not afford.

I am confident that the changes made by the Prime Minister show that we are a global leader committed to both net zero 2050 but also to the most ambitious NDC of any major economy on this planet. The way to do it is that you listen and you work. We are more likely to get there when we show that we can listen and we move with people. That is what I would say. If you are concerned about this, you should look at it in the global context. I would say to you, Ms Lucas, that you should be part of reassuring people that we have a history of delivery.

Q9 Caroline Lucas: It is not about me, Minister, it is about whether or not your own Climate Change Committee is saying that you are on track. It is saying that you are not on track and it is saying that these announcements were retrograde, sending out the wrong message. It is not me; it is the UN Climate Executive Secretary who is saying this stuff. Let's not try to personalise it. I also have constituents. Yours might be happy about some of the decisions that were made by the Prime Minister; mine certainly are not. They are tenants in cold, leaky homes and now we are going to have a change that means that landlords are not going to be required to increase the thermal efficiency of those homes, so my



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constituents are not happy.

Can you tell us why the Government have not signed the High Ambition Coalition leaders' statement? This was a statement on 19 September that you will be aware of. It is signed by countries like Austria, Belgium, Finland, Denmark, France, Spain and so on, about phasing out fossil fuels. Can you explain why the UK has not signed that?

Graham Stuart: I think you will find that other countries like Germany have also not signed it.

Caroline Lucas: That is not the reason, is it?

Graham Stuart: Do you want me to answer or not? Our belief is that we should focus on phasing down, phasing out—whatever it does, as long as it translates into real action—of unabated fossil fuels. As I say, it is the emissions that count, and therefore the language counts, especially if we are to create the broad coalition that we need for global action. There is no point making perfect the enemy of the good. What we have to do in our negotiations is to get enough countries on side so we really can shift and focus on what I suggest is even more the most immediate win, to stop and make sure that we have no new coal and we get the world to phase out unabated coal.

Caroline Lucas: I was hoping you were going to talk about unabated oil and gas as well, because that is where the debate is right now.

Graham Stuart: And unabated oil and gas.

Q10 **Caroline Lucas:** Indeed, what the statement from the High Ambition Coalition which we were once a member of, says is, "Abatement technologies have a role to play in reducing emissions, but that role in the decarbonization of energy systems is minimal. We cannot use it to green-light fossil fuel expansion." Isn't that exactly what the Government are doing?

Graham Stuart: No, there is no expansion of fossil fuel production in this country.

Q11 **Caroline Lucas:** Why are you getting all those licences then?

Graham Stuart: As you know, production is declining. Without new licences it would be declining at about 9%. With new licences we expect it to decline at 7%—more than is required globally in reduction, insofar as supply is the key driver, and I do not think supply is the key driver. It is demand that we need to focus on, and tilting at supply when the demand drivers are still there is ignoring the main problem. The most important thing is to focus on what counts most.

Chair: You made that point and I am afraid we are going to move on.

Q12 **Lloyd Russell-Moyle:** Caroline's question was about leadership. If we look at the leadership, that is: backtracking on cars, backtracking on EPC,



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not clamping down on fossil fuel subsidies, not acting despite the US introducing an Inflation Reduction Act, being on the back foot for carbon border adjustments. Leadership is not about following the pack, or even, as you answered Caroline's question, "Well, Germany hasn't done it". Leadership is leading. It is doing things first. It is showing the rest of the world that we might be a small player, but we have managed to do the transition so you can do the transition, too. More so, we have done the transition and we have the technologies that we can sell you to help do that.

Up towards COP, what things are we going to show leadership on that is ahead of everyone else in terms of the commitments and the transition that we are making here in Britain? At the moment, I am confused. Statements like the one that you just made—"My constituents are concerned that we were going to get rid of their boilers"—that never was the policy, was it? You know that. What leadership are we going to show? What things are we going to do ahead of the pack?

Graham Stuart: The most important single thing is to have policies that drive down emissions, and we have done that ahead of everybody else and have plans going forward, with a history of delivery and policies to deliver that will give us the most—

Q13 **Lloyd Russell-Moyle:** What new policies?

Graham Stuart: We set out our policies and our plans and our carbon budget plans in March in the "Powering up Britain" report, which is the most comprehensive full plan of any nation on this Earth that I am aware of.

Lloyd Russell-Moyle: You have covered some of this.

Graham Stuart: We are leading. As I said, not only are we leading on things that matter the most, we are also leading the international conversation and COP28, the most important—

Lloyd Russell-Moyle: Do you think it is—

Graham Stuart: Can I answer the question? The most important single thing was to get the rest of the world to follow us. We are on a net zero pathway. We need other countries to join us on a net zero pathway, and that is why at COP26 I am pleased to say we went from 30% of global GDP with net zero pledges to 90% when we handed over to Egypt. We are leading at home, we are leading internationally, and we will continue to do that—to show leadership where it matters.

You asked me for examples. For instance, on the contracts for difference, a now widely copied system that we brought in, as you will be aware, Mr Russell-Moyle, we inherited a pretty parlous state. Less than 7% of our electricity came from renewables in 2010, and in the first quarter of this year it was nearly 48%. We went from only 14% of homes having EPC-C or above in 2010 and it will be 50% this year, with a lot more to go. On



the most polluting of all fossil fuels, we went from—if you want global leadership I will give you this—as recently as 2012 nearly 40% of our electricity coming from coal. That was our inheritance from the last Government, but by next year it will be zero. That is global leadership. We can be proud of it technology-wise, policy-wise, and most importantly, Mr Russell-Moyle, in delivery. We have delivered more than anybody else and we are going to continue to do so.

Q14 **Lloyd Russell-Moyle:** If it is so good, Mr Stuart, why did the Secretary-General not invite the UK to speak? Wasn't that an indication that we are no longer a leader, we are a bit of an embarrassment?

Graham Stuart: I think that the only embarrassing thing is your question. The most important thing is—

Lloyd Russell-Moyle: Why do you think that the Secretary-General did not invite the UK to speak at his Climate Ambition Summit?

Graham Stuart: I was at the Climate Ambition Summit and played a full part in that. As I say, we are—

Lloyd Russell-Moyle: Obviously not impressive enough.

Graham Stuart: Mr Russell-Moyle, we are not the problem. Encouraging others to follow the UK on the net zero pathway is the biggest challenge.

Q15 **Anna McMorris:** I want to move on to how the Government are monitoring progress against your nationally determined contributions, the NDCs. In the progress report to Parliament, the Climate Change Committee reiterated in 2022 that the UK NDC was ambitious, consistent with the Paris goal. It was updated in September 2022 in response to the Glasgow pact and agreed by almost 200 countries at COP26. That is great. This updated NDC reiterates the target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 68% by 2030. They detail as well the things that need to be done to reach that target—things like substantial investment in clean energy, committing to phase out unabated coal power, committing to ending the Government's direct support for fossil fuel energy sector overseas, committing to ending the sale of new petrol and diesel vehicles by 2030. How does this advice from your own climate advisers square with the recent backtracking that we have seen from the Prime Minister? How do you intend to meet the nationally determined contributions?

Graham Stuart: We remain committed to our 2030 nationally determined contributions. I have said it is world leading, at 68%. The EU has set a target of 55%; ours is 68%. There has been no change to the UK's legally binding 2050 net zero target or its carbon budget targets or its 2030 NDC. Our package of proposals and policies to meet our targets will continue to evolve to adapt to changing circumstances, utilise technological developments and address emerging challenges. We have overachieved—



Q16 **Anna McMorris:** Your own advisers say that credible plans exist for only 25% of the required emissions reductions so, if that is the case, how will you meet them?

Graham Stuart: We have overachieved on all our carbon budgets to date. The net—

Anna McMorris: You are not answering the question, I am afraid. With respect, you are not answering my question.

Chair: Please let him have a go at answering, Anna. You have had two minutes to ask the question.

Graham Stuart: The net UK carbon account was 1%, 36 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalent, below the level of CB1, 14% below the level of CB2 and projected to be around 14% below the level of CB3. The Climate Change Committee, as you will be aware, has said that its confidence in the UK meeting the Fourth Carbon Budget has slightly increased in the last year.

We have systems to track our performance against it. The creation of the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero means that there is a Department dedicated to the delivery of our climate ambitions. We lead overall on energy security and net zero across government and we monitor cross-government net zero delivery and reporting on programme and project-level risks. Cross-departmental working led by my Department is illustrated by the publication of “Powering up Britain” in March and the response to the Climate Change Committee’s report in October.

Q17 **Anna McMorris:** All that still does not tell me how you are going to meet those NDCs and how you are going to mitigate against the fact that your own advisers say that plans do not exist for that.

Moving on, how are the Government internally tracking delivery, then, against these NDCs? We see that just in September this year Climate Action Tracker rated the UK’s climate targets, policies and finance as insufficient. This is a lower rating compared to 2022 where the UK was rated as almost sufficient. The Climate Action Tracker does not classify any country’s NDC commitments as 1.5° Paris agreement compatible, but the countries that are doing better than the UK include Norway, Kenya and Costa Rica, which are rated as almost sufficient. They are running ahead of the UK. How, then, do you think that you will internally track that delivery?

Graham Stuart: That is one particular outfit’s opinion on future trajectories. What we can say is that to date we have exceeded all our carbon budgets and that we have cut emissions by more than any other major economy on Earth. To answer your question about how it is monitored, the Domestic and Economic Affairs (Energy, Climate and Net Zero) Cabinet Committee ensures a co-ordinated approach to delivering net zero across Government and receives regular updates on delivery. As



you will be aware, NDCs are not legally binding under the UNFCCC, but countries are held accountable through an international assessment and review process. The Government will report to the UNFCCC on progress towards meeting the 2030 NDC every two years from 2024. The governance at sub-Cabinet Committee level assesses progress against carbon budgets and the UK 2030 NDC, and the Secretary of State is accountable to Parliament for progress against our net zero target.

Finally, the Greenhouse Gas Inventory provides annual estimates of UK emissions produced using the best available data on activity and emission factors. It is the primary mechanism by which the UK's progress towards national mitigation targets, including the NDC, are measured. The GHGI is also the basis of the annual statement of emissions to the UK Parliament as required under the Climate Change Act.

Chair: This is your last question, Anna.

Q18 **Anna McMorris:** I am not hearing much about leadership and wanting to improve the outcomes from the NDCs from your answers. You are just reading from your brief.

In terms of working across departmental outcomes, as the Chair mentioned, we met the FCDO Secretary of State just before this meeting, who set out the five aims from COP28, which do not seem to have matched the aims that you have come to this meeting with. I wonder how much conversation and co-operation is happening within Government. There is a Cabinet Committee with responsibility for energy, climate and net zero. What is the attendance for these meetings? Will you be publishing any updates to your NDC in the lead-up to COP28?

Graham Stuart: As I said, we already have the most ambitious NDC of any developed economy and we remain committed to delivering that. The leadership we have shown is on the delivery of all the carbon budgets we have had to date and we are determined—

Q19 **Anna McMorris:** When did you last meet?

Graham Stuart: I do not have the exact date in front of me but it meets—

Anna McMorris: Perhaps your official can help you with that.

Graham Stuart: It meets regularly and I know the next meeting is—

Anna McMorris: I wonder if your official can help with the date.

Graham Stuart: The next meeting is on Thursday. If you want to find out when sub-Committees of Cabinet meet, you can look it up on a website.

Chair: We have had trouble in the past so there is some history behind this. Thank you very much, Anna. We are going to move on now to our guest. I am sorry, Anna, we have to move on.



Q20 **Greg Clark:** I have a couple of brief questions on science and technology, which I think, Minister, you will agree is an area in which the UK has a leading position in the world. Can you set out for us what role the UK's science and technology expertise is going to play at COP? Are you going to find an opportunity to promote it and talk about it?

Graham Stuart: It is one of our great strengths as you rightly highlight. I know you have played your full part in guiding and developing that, too. Within the Department we have the net zero innovation portfolio, a £1 billion fund that supports turning research into commercially realisable products. As has been suggested already, one of the benefits of leaning in ahead of any other major economy on Earth is developing solutions that can be commercialised and contribute to the global challenge, at the same time providing jobs and prosperity here.

Q21 **Greg Clark:** At COP, will there be an opportunity to highlight and to draw others into that agenda?

Graham Stuart: We always use the COP pavilion to show developments from our research and development and to show the cutting-edge technology that we are involved in. I will certainly be highlighting that. If you look at our recent CfDs you have tidal stream energy. We are the world leader in that in terms of the amount deployed. I was pleased to see more tidal stream projects in AR5, and I hope to see that strengthen and grow over time. As you will also know from offshore wind, we have the Digital, Autonomous and Robotics Engineering Centre, if I have the name right, DARE, which I opened earlier this year, which again, with Government support, is driving forward technological advance within renewables and other technologies that we need for the transition.

Q22 **Greg Clark:** Can I ask one question about the role of innovation, science and technology in achieving emissions reductions? We are now nearly at the end of the year. It is about 26 years until we get to 2050. Do you expect achieving the net zero binding target will depend on advances in technology, some of which are not already known, or do you think that the technology that is going to deliver that is already there? In other words, can you reserve a future contribution that comes from technical progress or is that, as it were, in the price now?

Graham Stuart: No, I think that everyone recognises that in addition to the technology we have today, especially as deployed, we will need new technologies to come forward in order to reach net zero by 2050. We want to scale up existing nascent technologies, we want to support new technologies, and we want to see industrialisation and costs being driven down on others. It was not obvious when we went into the North Sea that driving the cost curve down was going to work for offshore wind—it is not exactly the most benign environment—yet we saw that quite remarkable drop from £120-plus per MWh in 2015 to just £39.50 two auctions later in 2019.



That is why, going back to the questions about whether you can quantify precisely how every percentage point of emissions reduction is going to be delivered, we recognise that we have to leave room for new innovation to come forward and flexibility on the combination of new technologies and new solutions, but also in terms of price discovery on what the right balance and mix should be and the best range of technologies that we need to deliver net zero.

Q23 **Greg Clark:** Is it the case that you would never plan for, as it were, 100% adherence in advance, on the basis of an assumption that the Government are making that there will be some technological advance that will make a further contribution that is unknowable at the moment? Would that be a fair characterisation?

Graham Stuart: I cannot remember all the previous data, so saying never—but you do not need to. If you think you have exactly laid out the pathway when you are talking about carbon budget 6, which goes to 2037, when you consider the scale of change that you can have in five or six years, let alone 14, you would be foolish to do so. Of course, we are starting work now on carbon budget 7, which will go later still.

I do not imagine that we would look to do that. It would be futile. If you wanted to make it look neat by saying, “We have done 100%,” you would not be adding usefully to the public debate. The duty of the Secretary of State is to ensure that we have policies that in her consideration will be able to lead to us meeting those budgets when the time comes.

Q24 **Barry Gardiner:** In the spirit of cross-party co-operation, I want to start by thanking you, Minister, for opening up delegate passes to Members of Parliament. It is a real step forward. It has been long awaited and I know that it was your initiative, so thank you for that.

The second thanks that I want to give is for the way in which you produced earlier this year the strategic framework for international climate and nature action, binding what happened at COP15 and the global biodiversity framework in with the climate process. There is much to commend there, but I wanted to pick out what the Committee on Climate Change said about the missed opportunity that it saw in that strategic framework to make effective use of trade policy to support climate action. I believe that you served in the Trade Department at one stage, so perhaps this is a good question that you can field.

Graham Stuart: First off, thank you for your thanks. I know that, both of us having been involved in GLOBE, we saw the power of bringing cross-party Back-Bench legislators together to share experience and to come home, self-confident and informed, and able to challenge the likes of me in Government, and to set the political weather. Thank you for that.

I am very proud of the role that the UK has played in catalysing a step change in international efforts to protect and restore global forests, for instance. At COP26 we rallied more than 140 partners behind the



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Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forests and Land Use and the shared mission to halt and reverse loss.

Q25 Barry Gardiner: I will come to land use but can I focus your attention on trade? Specifically, the EFRA Select Committee reported on protecting marine mammals as one of the things that we could positively engage in in international trade. Is this something that you believe the Government can take more seriously or take more account of in future? It is an area where we could exercise quite a bit of leverage. In the latest trade agreements with Australia, of course, we did groundbreaking work in animal rights and animal welfare, but we have not incorporated our climate change and environmental conditions into trade in quite the same way.

Graham Stuart: As you say, trade can play a vital role in reducing climate change by bringing down the cost of green goods, services and technologies and speeding their uptake around the world. There is always a judgment to be made about how much of things outside the direct specification of tariffs and non-tariff barriers and so on you put in a trade agreement. There is everything from human rights, labour rights, environment—

Barry Gardiner: Before I run out of time, will you look at it?

Graham Stuart: I am always happy to look at it and try to make sure we get that balance right. We always look to include as much as we can.

Q26 Barry Gardiner: Thank you. Land use is a critical factor in conserving nature and wildlife. Can you tell us when the Government's land use framework will be published? That is going to have a huge impact on our climate change objectives and tying in with the 30x30 at COP15, 30% not only of oceans but of land.

Graham Stuart: I am not aware of when exactly.

Q27 Barry Gardiner: Perhaps you could write to us on that, then. Before COP28 do you expect the UK to formally ratify BBNJ, biodiversity beyond national jurisdictions?

Graham Stuart: I take it that is a DEFRA responsibility and, therefore, it would be better directed at a DEFRA Minister.

Q28 Barry Gardiner: The great thing about the strategic framework was that it bound these two together. If what you are telling me is that the Department and DEFRA are not working in sync here and do not know what each other is doing, then that would be a cause for worry. I would urge you—

Graham Stuart: Mr Gardiner, you have been a Minister yourself and you know until a decision has actually been taken, notwithstanding the near permanent interaction between officials across Departments, when a decision has not yet been made by me, and you ask a DEFRA Minister, "When exactly?" and say, "Doesn't this show that you are not working



together?" it does not show that at all. It just shows that the energy security Minister has not made a decision. You ask another Minister and he cannot give you a precise date because the Government says, "In due course," and all these other expressions because you have write-rounds and all the other processes. It does not mean that at all.

I would say that DEFRA and my Department are working in a super-close, tight relationship and our leadership in nature, forests and before the coming Montreal CBD event as well as at COP shows you just how effective we have been.

Barry Gardiner: Indeed. I am not arguing with you—

Graham Stuart: I pay tribute to my colleagues in DEFRA.

Barry Gardiner: I am not arguing with you. I am simply urging you to have the conversation with DEFRA to urge upon it the importance of this as we go into COP. Thank you very much, Chair.

Q29 **Duncan Baker:** I am going to come on to talk about the actions that the Government are taking to mitigate extreme heat. Of course, this summer might not have quite shown that as much as last summer, where, if we remember, 40° heatwaves were relatively common, and excess death numbers were certainly up over the five-year average period at around 6%. It was a problem, and many feel that it will continue to be a growing problem. Will the Government be signing up to the global cooling pledge at COP28, and what will your Department be doing to ensure that for an ever-growing problem we are going to try to tackle it in a sustainable way?

Graham Stuart: Thank you for the question, Mr Baker. The global cooling pledge is an initiative led by the UAE to provide a long-term international commitment to mitigating energy consumption and emissions from cooling for the reasons you have just given, and sustainably adapting to the impact of extreme heat. The development of it has been led by the UAE with the US, France, the EC, Denmark and ourselves.

Signing the GCP would not require any new policy commitments as the UK already meets the pledge policy requirements through existing policies. There are significant benefits to the UK signing the GCP, including highlighting the UK's international leadership in climate action, energy security and net zero, with associated reputational benefits, while encouraging other countries with significant cooling challenges to follow our lead. It is yet another example of leadership.

When we have a formal announcement to make it will follow, but you can read into what I have said that we have been involved in its development. We fulfil its requirements and, as in so many other areas, we want and invite and will support other countries to join the UK on a net zero pathway.



Duncan Baker: So will we sign it?

Graham Stuart: The Government have made no decision and, as I say, it is a matter across Government. When that process has been finished—and we have been heavily involved in designing and working on it and already fulfil—I think that is as far as I can go.

Duncan Baker: If we have helped draft, prepare and implement it, I suspect we will probably move towards that position, but I will move on then.

Graham Stuart: We think it is a thoroughly good thing.

Q30 **Duncan Baker:** Good. In terms of technology, recognising that we have this challenge ahead of us, energy efficiency standards and introducing minimum legislation was something that was brought up at COP26. There was a pledge to try to double efficiency by 2030. Will you be introducing minimum energy efficiency standards to try to deal with the problem that is coming, particularly for devices such as air-conditioning units?

Graham Stuart: At COP28 the presidency has been talking about looking for a global goal of tripling renewables and doubling energy efficiency. As you know, we have done a lot of work in that space and set out an aim to reduce energy demand by 15% by 2030. We have a lot of policies and work going on in the Department and across other Departments in government to ensure that that can be fulfilled and that we can carry on our good record of moving from, as I say, that parlous position of just 14% of homes being decently insulated to half being done today and looking to go further faster, which is why we are spending 6.5 billion in this Parliament and have identified a further 6 billion for the period of 2025-28.

Q31 **Duncan Baker:** Do you think that we need a national cooling action plan to deal with this problem?

Graham Stuart: As I say, we already fulfil the global cooling pledge, but I am always open to looking at having the right mechanisms in place to ensure that we have the most efficient systems possible.

Q32 **Duncan Baker:** If we went down that track, given that the problem seems to be ever growing, what would the likely timescale be for us to implement such a plan?

Graham Stuart: The UK has committed to the phase-down of harmful HFC refrigerants, having ratified the Kigali amendment to the Montreal protocol in 2017, and through the F gas regulation will encourage the use of low GWP refrigerants and appropriate end-of-life handling of HFC refrigerants while avoiding refrigerant leakage. The UK is also working to support sustainable cooling internationally, as I say, through international research initiatives—for example, the UK co-led global cooling prize through emission innovation, resulting in the development of new air-



conditioning equipment that has a five times lower environmental impact than current models.

Q33 **Jerome Mayhew:** Ms Campbell, it is not fair, is it, that you get dragged in front of a Select Committee and nobody asks you any questions? I will start off with you because you are the chief negotiator. I know that the Minister is responsible, but you are the one in the room. On 4 December, I think it is, we will be focusing on finance. This is a key issue that has been raised. It has some contention around it, so I want to understand from your perspective what the UK's priorities are for international climate finance.

Alison Campbell: Finance is a critical part of any COP outcome and I do not think that this year is any different. We have a few tasks on our hands for COP28. One is showing the delivery of the \$100 billion, which developed countries committed to meet by 2020.

Q34 **Jerome Mayhew:** Have we?

Alison Campbell: We are on track to the trajectory that we set out at COP26. In our delivery plan we said we thought we would meet the \$100 billion by 2023. Our judgment is that we are on track for that.

Q35 **Jerome Mayhew:** Oxfam has done a bit of work on that, hasn't it? When it assessed it, there was about \$83 billion that it was looking at. By its calculation, only \$23 billion or \$24 billion was new money, properly attributed. Do you think it is wrong on that?

Alison Campbell: I think that it uses a very different way of accounting for climate finance then. What we go by is the OECD, because it is the body that has oversight of all the donors' data. It also has all the oversight of the data from the MDBs and it does its own specific calculations according to its definitions. It is the one we look at and which has been charged essentially with working out if we are meeting the \$100 billion.

Q36 **Jerome Mayhew:** We are on track to get to the \$100 billion?

Alison Campbell: We are on track to get to that, but we need to provide confidence. That is something that we are looking to do with other donors this year. As I say, we are confident of doing that. That is an important part of the puzzle for COP28.

Looking beyond that, we know the scale of needs is much larger than the billions. What we are going to be focused on is, for example, looking at how we can put a bigger focus on one of the goals of the Paris agreement, which is to align all finance flows with the Paris agreement—it is article 2.1(c) for those technically minded—and looking at how we can make progress on that within the negotiations. We are also looking at how we can send strong, clear signals to MDBs, to the IFIs and others on the need for reform of the finance architecture more broadly. A lot of



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work has been done on that this year through, for example, the Paris summit, and the signals we can send on that from COP28.

An important thing we also need to do is to lay the groundwork for next year, when we need to agree on a new finance goal post-2025. It will be very important at COP this year that we not only set out the process for doing that next year but we also look at how we can make some substantive progress on what the structure of that goal would look like. A big part of that for us is making sure that, of course, public finance is a critical part of that, but also looking at the bigger ecosystem beyond that and how we are going to make sure that we can deliver the trillions that are needed rather than just focusing on the billions. I would say they are the top priorities.

Q37 Jerome Mayhew: The redefinition by the United Kingdom Government of what international climate finance means for the UK has also caused controversy. You have brought into that definition climate-associated payments to the World Bank, for example, and to IDBs. Is that going to have an impact on what we can do with the money? Is that a positive step forward or is that something that we should regret? That is really a political question.

Graham Stuart: Yes, I think it is a political question. We have played an important role in urging and driving the international financial institutions to focus more on climate. It seems odd to get them to do that and then not count it, so it is entirely right and it is in line with other major donors. We are not an outlier; far from it. Ours is about the most rigorous definition. As was set out in the written ministerial statement, if we were to count all the climate finance that the UK will provide between 2021-22 and 2025-26, the figure would be far in excess of \$11.6 billion. We have among the most conservative definitions. When we give so much to the World Bank and others and we have pushed them to do more in the climate space, it is sensible that we count that because that is legitimate climate finance.

I do not think that will cause a problem. You might expect some NGOs or whatever to highlight it, but generally speaking I think that it is accepted and very welcome that we are doubling our climate finance and we are getting the amplification effect through the IFIs.

Q38 Jerome Mayhew: I am short of time so I am going to jump around a little bit. The loss and damage fund: are we going to sign up to that and pledge money to the loss and damage fund as we go to COP28, or is this a, "The Government have not yet made up their mind" answer?

Graham Stuart: The fifth Transitional Committee meeting—an extra one was scheduled last week—took place on Friday and Saturday. Alison was leading our negotiations there and I was following it closely. We have a recommendation from that committee, agreed by the committee, to come to COP. Our hope and expectation and the hope of the presidency would



be that, having set it out at Sharm, this could be operationalised at COP28.

Q39 **Jerome Mayhew:** Is that a yes?

Graham Stuart: Well, when it comes to finance, it was only agreed to come to COP and it has not been agreed at COP yet. I am not the Chancellor so I am not being evasive when I say it, but we have signed up to and supported that. We think it is important. It creates a positive atmosphere as we go into the COP that we have been able to get something out of the committee.

Q40 **Jerome Mayhew:** Very good. Sticking with the loss and damage fund, you do not need me to tell you that a number of countries are concerned by the proposal that it should be managed by the World Bank. Where do you see the World Bank? Is the UK falling behind the position of the US saying that the World Bank is the natural home for this or do you think that the issues about trust and the world order, to put it another way, that some countries see the World Bank as a part of, which is not necessarily positive, means that an alternative structure should be designed? Where do you think we should sit on that?

Graham Stuart: The good news is that agreement was reached at the fifth committee meeting, so I think we have landed in a place in which, by definition, parties were happy. As I say, it has to come and be formally agreed at COP.

Alison Campbell: The reason we supported this being under the World Bank was primarily the speed of getting it set up. A stand-alone fund takes a long time and it is urgent to get funding for loss and damage. There was a good conversation on that, I would say, in the Transitional Committee and where we ended up with an interim World Bank solution—we can see how that works and if there are concerns there will then be a conversation about what happens next—it felt like the right place to land from our perspective.

Jerome Mayhew: Compromise on both sides by the sounds of it.

Graham Stuart: And a recommendation, if I recall correctly, that it would be reviewed so that there would be time to think about an alternative and come up with it if that was desired. Of course, if it is working, then hopefully it will work and people will be happy with it.

Q41 **Jerome Mayhew:** My final jump is to the Bridgetown agenda. We have been supportive of it in its aims up until now, but will the UK be championing reforms like the Bridgetown agenda at COP28?

Graham Stuart: Alison, I will let you lead off on that.

Alison Campbell: We have been supportive of a lot of the elements of the Bridgetown agenda. We have been pushing things like climate resilient debt clauses and those solutions. As in my answer to your first



question, we want to see some of those elements recognised and promoted in the COP28 text. We will certainly be supportive of that. That is something that the UAE presidency is also keen to do.

Q42 Jerome Mayhew: They are linked with this whole World Bank argument, aren't they? I have read that there is criticism of the approach of the World Bank, which is one of lending as debt, isn't it, loans, instead of grants finance of a more permanent variety? Do you think there is a natural tension there between finance through the World Bank based on a lending mechanism and the things that the Bridgetown agenda might consider?

Graham Stuart: We will find out, but they have the mechanisms set up and it was certainly agreed at the committee that attached to the World Bank that balance could be set, independent governance. Alison will correct me if I have this wrong, but the whole point of loss and damage is that while they may occasionally, I suppose, be trying to leverage in loans, fundamentally it is about those who are not in a position in any way. It is not compensation, but it is about helping those who are at the forefront, and predominantly one would expect that would be in the form of grant. From a systems point of view, one would hope they could as easily dispense that, but it would have its own independent board to make sure that any of that culture creep would be resisted by this body.

Q43 Jerome Mayhew: Minister, I have one final point. I am interested in the way you very quickly said it is not compensation; you corrected me on that. Were you referring to an argument saying that rich industrialised countries should compensate poorer, less responsible countries for climate damage? There is another definition of compensation. You referred to grants for recovery. It would be right to use the second definition of compensation but the first definition would be more contentious. Is that the Government's position?

Graham Stuart: The Government's position is that the loss and damage fund, as I think is agreed, is not there for some historical compensation. It is there to compensate for the real-world challenges that countries and communities on the frontline are facing as a result of climate change.

Q44 Chair: Thank you. I have two final questions to round this out. After COP26 the UN Secretary-General went away saying he was determined to establish a methodology for metrics to measure each country's performance for their NDCs. Is that on the agenda? Has that been settled? Are we agreed what all the metrics are or does that remain an open issue for COP28?

Graham Stuart: Metrics are always a bit of an open issue, but we have made progress there. Alison will be able to update you.

Alison Campbell: My understanding of the UNSG's comments after COP26 was that he was focusing more on the measures outside NDCs, so the accountability of non-state actors. We have a very specific framework within the UNFCCC to account for the NDCs and the metrics there are



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pretty clear. There is a whole reporting framework that has been built around those metrics, which is standard across every country.

I think that the issue that the UN Secretary-General was focusing on was how you track the initiatives and the other things outside those NDCs—collaborative actions outside a single country's control. They are continuing to work on that. They have a high-level expert group, the HLEG, that is still doing work on that. I imagine that we will see some more progress towards that at COP28. It is certainly something that the UNSG and his team are promoting and we are working with them on.

Graham Stuart: The global stocktake this year, which is the first one under the Paris agreement, will hope for a ratchet effect. One of the things we hope for and that the presidency has said that it wants to see is that there is no point in doing a global stocktake and then not reflecting again on NDCs. I hope that we will see others joining the UK in having a net zero-aligned NDC. Otherwise, what is the point of the stocktake? Next year, and work this year in preparation, the big focus will be this new quantified goal, the post-2025 goal, and the year after that at Belém—it will be an Amazon-hosted COP—a major feature of that COP will be inviting countries to come forward with NDCs for 2035 following the 2030 one. That is the pattern over the next three years.

Q45 **Chair:** That is very helpful. Finally, this is probably a question for you, Alison. Having negotiated for the UK before, going into the final sessions in the coming weeks, what are the key challenges that you are worried about being unable to deliver?

Alison Campbell: I might frame it in a more positive sense. We have just come back from the pre-COP meeting, and one of the things I would say after that meeting is that I did get the sense that every country was going to COP28 with the aim of supporting the COP presidency in delivering an ambitious outcome in what is a critical year.

One of the issues we have is that clearly there is a lot to deliver at this COP. You have the global stocktake, which as the Minister just said is the first ever global stocktake of the Paris agreement—not just taking stock in terms of what has happened in the past but what we are going to do differently going forward across the piece. That is a very big agenda. We need to agree a new global framework on adaptation, which is an important agenda. We have to do all the things we have just talked about on finance, including laying the groundwork for the new goal that will come after 2025. We have to agree the loss and damage fund and finalise that.

There is a huge range of issues that are very political and very important, and one of the big issues with the COP is always the time we have to do that across the two weeks and getting 198 countries to agree to any of that is very difficult. For me, that is the biggest question: how do we bring all that together towards an ambitious outcome at COP28? We just



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came back from a meeting that was positive and we are hoping that we can work with everyone towards getting the outcomes that we need.

Graham Stuart: The geopolitical backdrop is not good. I was at Chennai for the G20 climate Ministers meeting and that was not good. Generally, it has been quite a negative backdrop and atmosphere, and it was in that context that we arrived at pre-COP last week. I have to pay tribute to the presidency designate. Dr Sultan Al Jaber has gone out there with his team all over the world listening to people. We saw positive effects of that because we were surprised on the upside at the positive atmosphere, a sense of constructive engagement by people. There were the normal battles but there was a real sense that we could get something positive done. The outcome of the fifth Transitional Committee—there had to be a fifth one in order to do it—is that it has come out with a recommendation.

Compared to where you might have thought we would be or where I thought we would be when I came out of Chennai, I have to say that we are in a much better place, which is not to say there are not a huge number of challenges but the presidency has done a great job. I think there is a real desire by an awful lot of people who have been listened to and engaged with to come into this COP and try to come up with something positive.

Chair: Thank you, Minister, for concluding on that constructive and positive note. We look forward to seeing the outcome of your positivity in Dubai ourselves, those of us who are able to go. Again, thank you for facilitating that. Thank you for this session, too, Minister Graham Stuart and Alison Campbell from the Department. Thank you to Gary O'Key and Mahika Dixit who prepared our brief.