



# Environmental Audit Committee

## Oral evidence: Outcomes of UNFCCC COP28, HC 512

Wednesday 31 January 2024

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Members present: Philip Dunne (Chair); Sir Christopher Chope; Barry Gardiner; James Gray; Chris Grayling; Clive Lewis; Caroline Lucas; Cherilyn Mackrory; Jerome Mayhew; Anna McMorrin; Dr Matthew Offord; Claudia Webbe.

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### 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:** Good afternoon and welcome to the Environmental Audit Committee. For our oral evidence session today we are very pleased to welcome the Minister for the Environment, the right hon. Graham Stuart. Perhaps you could introduce your colleague Alison Campbell and her role in helping to deliver the UK priorities at COP28.

**Graham Stuart:** Alison is our lead negotiator and played a critical role, which I will refer to. As I was led to believe you would, you want me to make a few opening remarks.

Q2 **Chair:** Well, we shall but we have quite a lot of questions. You were kind enough to appear before the Committee ahead of COP28, which was very welcome, and we see this as a session to gain your reflections on the outcome and to look ahead to the next. I will give you a question against which you can address opening remarks.

The ambition was to deliver the first global stocktake. That was one of the main priorities of COP28. Do you feel that this was achieved, and does it help in keeping the Paris ambition of 1.5°C alive?

**Graham Stuart:** Thank you, Chair, and thank you to the Committee for a full attendance today. It is great to be back here to discuss the outcomes of COP28, having had the opportunity—for which many thanks—to discuss it before we went there.

I will begin by paying tribute to John Kerry and Xie Zhenhua whose personal relationship and personal efforts played a big part in the progress made over recent years. I thank them for all that they have done, as they have both stepped down now.

We went to COP28 with clear objectives to achieve an ambitious global stocktake outcome—that was the centrepiece of this particular COP—spearhead urgent action to ensure 1.5° remained in reach, a green fund and funding arrangements for loss and damage, agree a framework for the global goal and adaptation, and make progress towards unlocking the trillions required in climate finance.

I think that we can all be proud of the role that the UK delegation played in Dubai. We were pivotal in so many arenas, including the central one. In particular, I highlight the role of our lead climate negotiator Alison Campbell, who sits to my right, who co-chaired negotiations on the global stocktake, which as I say is a central outcome of this COP. She did that with her customary diligence, good humour and great diplomatic skills.

The outcome of that stocktake saw the parties agreeing for the first time ever in UNFCCC history to transition away from fossil fuels and to say so in terms. Following the historic agreement on coal in the Glasgow climate pact at COP26, parties have gone that one step further now and made



commitments on fossil fuels and trebling renewables capacity, marking the beginning of the end of the unabated fossil fuel era. That is alongside an agreement—and it is a technical point, but it is an important one—that the next round, the 2035 nationally determined contributions, should be economy-wide and aligned with 1.5°C. We need to convert those into that happening globally, but that is a significant point.

**Q3 Chair:** If I may, that will include maritime and aviation emissions for the first time globally, will it?

**Graham Stuart:** Indeed.<sup>1</sup> The other big piece coming out of Sharm was the loss and damage fund. There was going to be a big issue of trust if that could not be operationalised and there was a desire to move quickly on it. We played a leading role throughout the whole of last year on that, sitting on the transitional committee.

Debbie Palmer, Alison's colleague from the Foreign Office, played a really significant role on loss and damage and that culminated in agreement on the fund and funding arrangements at the start of COP28. It is quite unusual to have a major announcement on day one and to be able to get something so thorny and potentially damaging to confidence over the line early. That is a great credit not only to Debbie and the transitional committee but, of course, to the presidency who played a really positive role. The UK pledge was one of the first announced, which totalled 60 million altogether.

The COP did not go far enough. We secured new commitments to keep 1.5° but we wanted to see even greater ambition, including stronger language on the peaking of emissions, NDCs and fossil fuels. I also think the agreement could have gone further in recognising the particular circumstances of the most climate-vulnerable countries, especially the small and developing island states. We advocated this strongly during our leadership of the climate and development ministerial, which took place pre-COP, and we will continue to work on that.

I also highlighted in my intervention on behalf of the UK that the issue during the COP28 closing plenary—Samoa's intervention on behalf of AOSIS, the Association of Small Island States in plenary—was a stark reminder of how much more work we need to do to keep 1.5° in reach and echoed their concerns, which in their case are pretty existential.

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<sup>1</sup> *Note by witness:* "Having reviewed my response to the question asking whether the next round of 2035 Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) would include maritime and aviation emissions for the first time globally I would be grateful if the minutes [of evidence] could be amended as I may not have responded accurately."

Please amend my response to the following:

'As Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) are nationally determined it is up to each Party to decide what they will include in their NDC. In the UK, international aviation and shipping is included in our Carbon Budget 6, but work is ongoing this year to decide whether we will include international aviation and shipping in the UK's 2035 NDC.'



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Going forward, we will continue to raise ambition, use the available science and seek to empower the voices of those most vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

Finally, we had wanted to see further moves towards ending new coal power. While it was not possible to achieve consensus on this at COP28, the overall energy package and commitment to triple global renewables and double energy efficiency were undeniably huge achievements. Looking ahead, briefly turning to COP29 in Azerbaijan—

**Q4 Chair:** Can I stop you for a second, Minister? You have covered a number of the points on which I was going to ask you about your own views, but on the 1.5°C ambition, which was the first primary ambition when you came before us in November, by some measure we hit that level in 2023. Is it too late at this point and do you think enough was done to focus on achieving that?

**Graham Stuart:** The world is not on track for that. The major economy that has decarbonised more than any other on earth—namely, us—had reduced by 48% by 2021 on the 1990 baseline and yet the world on the 2019 baseline needs to reduce by 43% by 2030. We are not on track, on the one hand—and I think we might have discussed in November that you get despairing about how far off track we are—but, on the other hand, we have bent the curve and every single one of these in many ways slightly absurd occasions, which is a COP, so many people coming together, moves that further. It is hard to see how we would be able to keep that movement, keep bending the curve if we did not have COPs to bring the world together.

**Q5 Chair:** Moving forward, during the course of the next year we will have a general election in the UK and there will be a new Government. You may or may not be in post following the election. How do you see prioritising delivery of the UK ambition through the routine drumbeat of COP meetings that take place and the run-up to every annual session? Is that being driven by you; is it being driven by the Prime Minister; is it being driven by Alison sitting beside you?

**Graham Stuart:** The UK Government position—and we are fortunate in having in many ways a broad consensus; so, whoever wins the general election—is that since the 2008 Climate Act, which I think five colleagues voted against, there has been consensus on the need for action. The science becomes ever more stark and harder to dispute, and clarity about the need for change is there. We will continue to work in multiple fora, because it is complex, so we will look doubtless to finance, we have the whole role of nature, always power and energy at the heart of this as well. We will continue to make the case. We will be focusing on the means of implementation and moving the money, so looking at that will be a big part of this coming year.

Then there is Belém the following year, which will be a sort of Amazon COP, and that is where we will set the next set. The framework from Paris



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is that every country has to set its own targets and pathway to that. There is a big couple of years to make sure that we move the finance and that we can take what was a significant achievement at COP28 and convert that into NDCs for the mid-2030s, which much more closely start to align us. That is what we will be working on.

**Q6 Chair:** That will require cross-government effort, comparable to what happened in our leadership of COP26, when we came up with the first NDC for the UK. Do we have the structures in government to deliver that again or have they not been dismantled following COP26?

**Graham Stuart:** Our COP team is smaller than it was and obviously the resource level is very different when you are not president of the COP, but we have climate diplomats all over the world, and I think we can be proud of that, in all our posts. We have a significant central resource. The lead for this is within my Department and under me, but the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office has a big role to play as well. It has a team that played a significant role in loss and damage, as I said.

You always have to look at each thing as it comes along but we are pretty well set, and we are playing a leading role. Regardless of what happens this year, I see no reason why the UK would not continue to do so. We do so from a position where, of all the major economies, we have reduced our emissions more than anybody else. The biggest challenge for us on climate, despite all the domestic ones, is to get the rest of the world to join us on the net zero pathway that we are proudly trailblazing on.

**Q7 Chair:** I want to finish with one domestic question for you, which is a bit specific, but it is top of mind this morning. That is the extent to which the Department is prepared to be able to sign contracts for carbon capture and storage facilities to keep the delivery of that whole element, which is so key to achieving net zero in 2050, on track irrespective of a general election.

**Graham Stuart:** As you know, last March we announced up to £20 billion to support the roll-out of carbon capture. There is the combination of making sure we get the capture element; you have to have the pipelines and then the storage. The work to be done is happening with HyNet on the west coast and with the East Coast Cluster in the east. We are moving forward at pace, but we are genuinely trailblazing. No one has done this before. Everything has to be created and we have to have proper governance about it, and make sure we consult and listen to industry, so that we can deliver it.

Carbon capture is essential. I have not seen any analysis in the last 20 years that does not see carbon capture as having a role to play if you are going to meet your net zero targets. For us, there is also an enormous potential to upsize economically if we can lead on it, develop the technologies, open up our carbon sinks and become potentially the lead European centre for that. It will be a big business in itself and a huge



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facilitator of industrial renaissance in the north of England, Scotland, Wales and elsewhere.

**Q8 Chair:** Are we on track to sign contracts before the summer recess or the first half of the year, to use the Prime Minister's language?

**Graham Stuart:** I am unable to give you anything specific on that today. I will write to you if I have anything useful to share.

**Chair:** Thank you.

**Q9 Anna McMorris:** I will start by paying tribute to all the really hard-working officials who worked night and day at COP28 and represented the UK brilliantly in Dubai. Thank you.

I want to talk about the UK's position as a climate leader and post-COP28 we know that there are many reports. You will know that we, as the Opposition, continually challenge that the UK is indeed a climate leader, with new oil and gas licences announced. In fact, just this afternoon 24 new licences have been offered in a second tranche of the oil and gas round. That has happened this afternoon and it contradicts the efforts being made as a signatory to the COP28 agreement, in fact so much so that a former member of this Committee, Chris Skidmore, resigned his seat in protest at that. The Committee on Climate Change said yesterday that there is an obligation on the UK to support the acceleration of global transition away from fossil fuels not towards them. What does the Minister say to that?

**Graham Stuart:** Oil and gas licences are good news in our transition to net zero. We have a fast-declining basin. With the new licences production, it is expected to fall at 7% a year; it is expected to halve in the next decade. It is falling faster than is required globally according to IEA. Without new investment, we will not see cleaner production coming forward. If you look at Rosebank, for instance, it is expected, without electrification, to come in at around 12 kg a barrel compared to an offshore average of 20 kg.

The main argument that people have against new oil and gas licences is to cite all the people who say they don't like new oil and gas licences. When you break it down, what would happen if we did not have new oil and gas licences is that we would import more LNG from abroad with four times the emissions of domestically-produced gas, which comes out of the North Sea and nearly all of which is consumed here. The oil is refined overwhelmingly in European refineries, including in the UK but mostly, because it is high sulphur, there is a history there.

The only thing that would happen is that it would make no difference to our consumption, but it would mean that we imported more with higher emissions. That makes no sense from a purely environmental short-term point of view. It would be great to see some acknowledgement rather than just playing citing games. Secondly, it would weaken the tens of billions of pounds of tax that we get, which helps us support families



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deliver the green transition. Thirdly, it threatens the 200,000 people who are supported by the industry, who will be critical. You see the Robert Gordon University analysis suggesting that if you don't have new investment and new licences, if you don't keep the North Sea alive for oil and gas, you will lose the skills that will be necessary for the transition.

Whether it is on short-term emissions, taxes, jobs, the UK economy or the ability to deliver net zero, on every single front new oil and gas licences—I accept it is counterintuitive, but it is not a complex argument to get through to see that it is the right thing to do.

**Anna McMorrin:** I think the Minister has just answered his own—it is counterproductive, and I think he just accepted that.

**Jerome Mayhew:** He didn't say that. He said counterintuitive.

**Anna McMorrin:** I know he said that but what he meant—

**Chair:** Sorry, we are not going to have a debate. We are going to ask the Minister questions.

Q10 **Anna McMorrin:** Let me continue in my questioning. We are coming up to the one-year anniversary of the decision to scrap the UK climate envoy who was positioned in the FCDO. Many other countries—China, Brazil, Canada, Australia, Germany, the US—all have climate envoys. Where is the decision to reinstate that post?

**Graham Stuart:** That is a matter for the Prime Minister and—

Q11 **Anna McMorrin:** What is your view?

**Graham Stuart:** I am the Minister responsible. I lead net zero policy. I was responsible for negotiations at COP. I have that responsibility. I hope I have been around long enough and just about got it together sufficiently fully to be able to do that job. I am on personal terms with all the key players across the world.

Q12 **Anna McMorrin:** But you don't think there should be one?

**Graham Stuart:** It is not my decision to make. It is not clear to me what we are losing, although obviously people—

Q13 **Anna McMorrin:** What about the circumstances where you were called back to the Rwanda vote in the House of Commons with a 7,000-mile round trip, leaving a position vacant at a critical time for climate negotiations? Doesn't that just spell out the need for such a high-profile climate envoy position in place?

**Graham Stuart:** As you know, authority comes first and foremost from this elected Parliament. As a Minister in this elected Government who has had responsibility for this for a little while now and personal experience over decades, I think you would not have anyone with greater authority



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than someone appointed by the Prime Minister as a Minister in that Government.

Q14 **Anna McMorrin:** You weren't there. You were called back. You weren't there for the critical negotiations of that last night.

**Graham Stuart:** That is not true.

**Anna McMorrin:** It is true.

**Graham Stuart:** If you can give me the meetings that I missed—because I came back and went straight back out again.

**Anna McMorrin:** Of course you did, on a 7,000-mile trip.

**Chair:** You have made the point, Anna. We are going to press on with a very quick question from Chris Grayling.

Q15 **Chris Grayling:** Is the Minister aware of the work done by Columbia and Yale Universities on the effectiveness of individual countries' policies on climate and the environment around the world? Is he aware that the UK comes second of all the countries in the world for the quality of our policies and approach to climate and environmental issues?

**Graham Stuart:** As I say, for climate leadership, fundamentally we have one metric at the heart of the measurement of this, which is: are you bringing down your emissions?. It is all about emissions and we have cut ours more than any other major economy on the planet and we have more ambitions going forward.

If people genuinely were concerned more about the climate than they were about politics and partisanship, they would not struggle to acknowledge that. They would want to strengthen our voice in the world rather than get an echo chamber of criticism that they then refer to and say how we are losing climate leadership and that we are being weakened. We should be proud of what we have done, proud of where we are going, and this Committee and others in this Parliament keep people like me honest to make sure that we keep delivering and don't deviate.

**Chair:** Caroline Lucas has a quick supplementary on that point.

Q16 **Caroline Lucas:** Yes, keeping the Minister honest is indeed what this Committee is for. I wonder from the comments you have made about those of us who you think are just talking to an echo chamber—and I can promise you I have been talking about this subject for about 40 years before there was even a chamber to be echoed in—whether the implication is that the Climate Change Committee is wrong, that your colleague who was the president of COP26 is wrong, our colleague Chris Skidmore, who has resigned, is wrong. Surely you would concede that the arguments are not as self-evident as you claim. There is a big debate about the signal that is given by giving out these new licences, which is over and above the practical difference, although that is significant, in our





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own emissions. The Climate Change Committee has been deeply concerned about the signal it gives to others. Do you at least concede that that is an important issue?

**Graham Stuart:** There is an awful lot of people involved in giving out the signal. You have just done what I said, citing all these people who say— I am an environmentalist; I was on the joint committee that passed the pre-legislative scrutiny of the Climate Act in 2007; my first COP was in 2005. I came into this job. I would be entirely happy to close down our North Sea operations if I thought that was the right thing to do for the climate.

**Caroline Lucas:** You are not answering my question.

**Graham Stuart:** I am telling you that citing names does not give me an argument.

Q17 **Caroline Lucas:** They are not names. They are experts here. The Climate Change Committee is not just names. It is some of the best climate scientists coming together to advise Parliament and Government. To that extent, I don't think it is reasonable for you simply to make that sound as if it is some kind of clamouring from protestors who are outside of this place. These are your advisers.

**Graham Stuart:** But again, it is about this signal and I accept it is counterintuitive but having come into this job—

Q18 **Caroline Lucas:** Is the Climate Change Committee wrong?

**Graham Stuart:** Would you like me to answer or not?

**Caroline Lucas:** No, because you are saying the same thing again. Do you think the Climate Change Committee is wrong?

**Graham Stuart:** I am saying that new oil and gas licences in fact strengthen our ability to get to net zero. They cement and support our climate leadership and that is my opinion. When I am told it sends signals, if people who ought to— If their analysis is different in the real world impacts, I would like to hear those arguments. If they don't, I think they should join me in telling the world that it is the right thing, because we wouldn't do it otherwise.

**Chair:** Minister, you have been very clear. We are going to move on to Barry Gardiner.

Q19 **Barry Gardiner:** Ms Campbell, I, too, would like to pay tribute to the work that you and others did at the COP. Could you tell us what steps have been taken to make sure that the UK is in a position to update and strengthen its NDC by COP30 in 2025?

**Alison Campbell:** It is a very similar process to the one that we ran ahead of COP26. We have an internal team in DESNZ that is doing analysis. We will obviously be looking closely at the outcome of COP28,



because it had some very clear guidance on what is expected for the next round of NDCs, as we know other countries will. Over time, over the course of the year, we will begin to develop an approach across Government and through the usual Cabinet Committees, so that we are ready for the deadline for submission, which is nine to 12 months before COP30.

**Q20 Barry Gardiner:** To pick up on those Cabinet Committees, it would be helpful to understand a little bit more about the way in which the cross-departmental governance committee, Domestic and Economic Affairs, which looks after energy and climate net zero, will report back. When asked how often the Cabinet Committee meets, the Minister said, "If you want to find out when Sub-Committees of Committee meet, you can look it up on the website". However, the website only lists the membership of the Cabinet Committees, and it does not give you that further information. We were then told it is a long-established precedent that information about Cabinet and its Committees, beyond what is available, is not normally shared. It is trying to understand, because you will recall the National Audit Office report that said there were serious failings in the holistic way in which the Government were looking cohesively across Departments. I welcome this Committee if it will enable that coherent working, but it would be good to know exactly what is happening to make sure that that takes place.

**Graham Stuart:** That is probably more of a question to me as I sit on it. I don't have my briefing in front of me as to what I should or should not say about Cabinet Sub-Committees. Anyway, it is chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister, which is on public record, and it brings together colleagues across Departments with my Secretary of State, and I sit on it as well. It provides overarching governance.

In the context of your question about the NDC, we are unusual, if not unique, in that we have already legislated for that period because we have the Sixth Carbon Budget. We had a 68% reduction on the 1990 baseline by 2030 in the first NDC and we are doing further work for the next NDC, for which Alison has laid out the timeline. Fundamentally, we know what we will be doing between 2033 and 2037 because that is part of the Sixth Carbon Budget, and it sees us moving to 77% or 78% reduction. Some others may be having to work very hard to pull that together. We are already there, and it will be out of that—

**Q21 Barry Gardiner:** No, sorry, Minister, we are not already there. We have set the targets, and what I am trying to explore is the structures to be able to deliver those targets. I am very pleased that we have set those targets. I am not quibbling with you there, but I am trying to explore the levers, in effect, to make sure that we actually achieve them. The stocktake concluded that the implementation of current NDCs would reduce emissions by an average of just 2% by 2030, and that was based on 2019, whereas what we actually needed was 43%, as the Minister said earlier. Is it the case that from the negotiations you believe that we will



be able to achieve that within the next six years?

**Graham Stuart:** We hoped that we would have seen more focus on the 2030 NDCs to be revisited because, exactly as you said, they are so far off. In some senses there is a danger of everything moving on to 2035 when this is the critical decade. On the other hand, of course, if those 2035 NDCs are better aligned with and ideally aligned with 1.5°, the countries that need to deliver in 2035 will need to take earlier and more ambitious action this decade.

Q22 **Barry Gardiner:** You are right, Minister, to focus on the 2030 NDCs and of course it is those that the Committee on Climate Change has given us pause for thought about. While it has revised its estimate of the percentage of the required emissions reductions, which are covered by credible plans—it has put it up, I am pleased to say, from 25% to 28%—that still leaves us with 72% where it believes there is no credible plan. It would be good to know how you feel we will achieve that, make up that shortfall by 2030. I don't know if Ms Campbell has anything to offer on that.

**Graham Stuart:** Ms Campbell deals with this on the international negotiation side as opposed to domestic delivery, which is more my bag as well as the international Minister. Focusing on making sure that we get that delivery right is obviously a very important thing. You can ask me whatever you want, and I will obviously co-operatively answer, but I was just going to say that I thought the focus of today with COP28 and COP29 and the future is not about particularly focusing on the UK delivery.

As I say, we have met every carbon budget to date. We have cut emissions more than any other major economy. I am confident that we will deliver our NDC in 2030 and, even if we were off, we would probably still have cut our emissions more than any other major economy on earth. If you genuinely are interested in climate change—I am not saying it is not a legitimate thing to hold us to account here—we are not the problem. The problem is getting the rest of the world to join us on a net zero pathway. Obviously, there is a lot of detail, and we could spend a lot of time talking about how we are delivering at home, but I did not think that was the focus for today's particular session.

Q23 **Barry Gardiner:** No, I was focusing on the NDCs, which of course are part of our international commitment. As you rightly said, the NDCs are focused on 2030, so that is why I was checking where we were on the scoreboard, which is an international scoreboard.

**Graham Stuart:** Ahead, is the basic answer for now and, even if we were to struggle, I would expect that we would stay ahead. As I say, it is getting the rest of the world to join us on this net zero pathway is what we need. The EU said last year that it would look at raising its ambition from 55% but did not do so, of course.

Q24 **Barry Gardiner:** Minister, you accused one of my colleagues of throwing names and words out there. I do not think we should be trading



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positions; let's just come down to figures. The Government have emphasised the commitment to mobilising \$100 billion in climate finance this year. How is that going? How much is out of the door and how much is delivering good climate projects on the ground?

**Graham Stuart:** That is an excellent question. The OECD marks a scorecard on that across the donor countries. It was originally supposed to be delivered in 2020 and it wasn't, and that does knock when you are trying to build confidence and was not helpful. But they now think it was most likely delivered in 2022 and almost certainly was delivered in 2023 but, if you imagine all these countries, all the programmes and all the delivery data takes time, it takes about two years before we know definitively. It will not be until late this year that we will know about 2022 and whether it was delivered that year or not, but it will be there or thereabouts.

One of the things in trying to move on from 100 billion—I understand why it is a totemic issue of trust and it is important that it is delivered—in the real world where we need trillions, whether it is 98 billion or 101.2 at one level is not that material. What we have to do, and what we are focused on is re-engineering through the Multilateral Development Banks, through SIF—

Q25 **Barry Gardiner:** If I can ask you about the tripling of the adaptation finance, which was due to go from 500 million to 1.5 billion in 2025, the 500 million is the 2019 figure. We are quite a way along to 2025 now—January 2024—how is that one going?

**Graham Stuart:** There is the doubling, which was agreed at Glasgow, as you rightly say. We agreed to triple ours as a part of showing leadership. We are on track to deliver that.

Q26 **Barry Gardiner:** Can you tell us how much is out of the door now?

**Graham Stuart:** Alison may or may not be able to help us with that?

**Alison Campbell:** A point on the doubling commitment: that was obviously a big topic of conversation at COP28 and, quite rightly, a lot of developing countries wanted to see how we were doing. One of the commitments made at COP28 was that this year, as developed countries, as donors, we would produce a delivery plan that showed where we were towards that doubling. That is something that we will have to do before COP29, which will take some co-ordination among donors, but which I think will be good for transparency, so that everybody can see where we are on the road to that commitment, as we are getting close to the deadline now in 2025.

**Chair:** Thank you very much, Barry. I am afraid you have had your turn, thank you, and I appreciate the way you lowered the temperature of the room.

Q27 **Jerome Mayhew:** I am famous for raising the temperature in these



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things. Minister, the officials have quite rightly been praised for their commitment. I wonder if I can extend that to the ministerial team as well because you work very hard as well.

I am interested in the Government policies at home about halting the decline in biodiversity and reversing it from 2030 and how that links into our more global climate change ambitions. You have said—in fact, I think it was you personally in the run-up to COP28—creating a sustainable management of nature here at home, on land and also in British overseas territories, particularly in the ocean, is crucial to delivering on net zero as well as building resilience in our domestic economy, but also in our landscape and environment.

That brings me on to the Office for Environmental Protection and its scorecard, which was published in the last month or so. There are two ways you can spin this: on the one hand you could say we missed 10 of them. On the other hand, you could say we hit four of them. Trying to keep the spin out of it, it says we are on target on achieving four. We are there or thereabouts for about 11. We are missing 10 and it is not easy to say one way or the other for about 15. What do you take from that and what is your response to where we are at in the domestic sphere?

**Graham Stuart:** We have set ambitious goals for 2030 to make sure we reverse this destruction of nature, which has been such a part of the way that this country has been run, and we need to keep working hard on it. Land use and nature is a challenge both here and elsewhere. It is absolutely essential, and we need to deliver those things that we have set out because they are the right thing to do for the multiple fronts that you have already touched on.

Q28 **Jerome Mayhew:** So it is quite right that the OEP are holding the Government to account. Do you anticipate the Government's actions changing as a result of the report of the OEP and, if not, what is the point of them?

**Graham Stuart:** I always find it frustrating if a Minister says, "Well, it is not actually in my departmental portfolio," but we hold the net zero responsibility but of course DEFRA leads on those areas of policy. It is better to ask a DEFRA Minister about the detail of that, but I used to chair the Education Select Committee and the whole point of Committees like this is that they come up with recommendations and they mark the scorecard and there is no point if Governments do not listen, especially when they are being held to account on targets and objectives that they themselves set. That is why our system is quite effective because we have to change when we are given evidence that we are off track.

Q29 **Jerome Mayhew:** In your earlier response you made reference to the importance of land use as part of our response to biodiversity net loss in this country. There has been an oft repeated commitment to publish a land use framework. In fact, unfortunately the commitment was to publish it in 2023 and you, among a number of other Ministers, have



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repeated that undertaking publicly but we all know it has not happened. I recognise that is a DEFRA lead but are you able to give any indication as to whether the Government still intends to publish a land use framework either at all or is it a—

**Graham Stuart:** In preparing to talk about COP28 I did not come prepared to answer that domestic question on a DEFRA area of responsibility, but I will write.

**Jerome Mayhew:** If you could write to us, that would be good.

**Chair:** The relevance obviously is through the COP CBD process.

Q30 **Jerome Mayhew:** We have a joint statement on that. We subscribed at COP28 to the Joint Statement on Climate, Nature and People. We want to ask what has been done to ensure the coherence between our next national biodiversity strategy and action plan here, which has been lined up for the Convention on Biological Diversity in COP later on this year. You see how they are pretty profoundly linked?

**Graham Stuart:** You cannot deliver net zero without the delivery of nature and land use.

Q31 **Jerome Mayhew:** Given their interconnectedness, are you able to expand a little bit? I know that is a DEFRA responsibility and DEFRA lead on these areas, but is it your intention to go into the Convention on Biological Diversity in COP later this year with a bit more to show?

**Graham Stuart:** What I can say on the international front is that at the third Climate and Development Ministerial, which was co-chaired by me, the UAE, Malawi and Vanuatu, participating countries agreed to improve the access, efficiency and effectiveness of adaptation finance provision for the most vulnerable. We were looking to make sure it is country-led, that we increase the quantum, and we make it easier to get those funds flowing. Because these funds are often notionally available, but they do not actually flow.

The UK was also at the forefront of efforts to recognise the crucial role of nature and forests in climate mitigation and adaptation, for the reason you said, including by supporting the Forest Climate Leaders Partnership, the FCLP, which of course we helped to found at COP27 as a platform for delivering COP26 forest ambitions and in demonstrating its added value for driving progress on key forest protection priorities.

In addition to that, we announced programmes of up to £576 million at COP28 to support countries in halting forest loss, protecting nature, contributing to and going beyond our pledge to invest £1.5 billion on forests between 2021-22 and 2025-26. Of that £576 million announced by the Prime Minister, £466 million is new funding and that includes £30 million to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries, £35 million to the Amazon Fund—which I have been able to see work of myself when I went to the Amazon and



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launched an industrial decarbonisation hub partnership with Brazil—and it included £500 million for investment in sustainable forest and land use with the aim of unlocking £2 billion of additional private investment.

In addition to that, we have done a lot of work to support making sure that we have the right standards and can restore confidence in a voluntary carbon market space as well because we think that could be a significant flow of additional funds to help move from deforestation to stability to—if it suits the country—possible afforestation. We are doing a lot of work in that space. I am sorry I am less strong today on domestic delivery.

**Chair:** Can I bring this to a halt because we have three more sets of questions and 15 minutes. You have five minutes each.

Q32 **Claudia Webbe:** Thank you, Minister, for being with us today. We know that 2023 was the world's hottest on record; 2024 could be hotter still. We know that, the hotter it gets, the more demand there is for cooling systems and air conditioners, increasing our electricity use and impacting on carbon, increasing greenhouse gas emissions, which in turn make the world even hotter.

At COP28 the UK was one of over 60 countries to sign up to the Global Cooling Pledge and with it the commitment to publish a national cooling action plan. How comprehensive and ambitious will this national cooling action plan be and what are the expected timescales for implementing it? Thank you.

**Graham Stuart:** Thank you. The Global Cooling Pledge was signed by 65 countries at COP28, and we were both a signatory and a lead in the conceptualisation and development of the pledge commitments. As you rightly say, Ms Webbe, we committed to publishing a national cooling action plan, considering cooling when publishing a national action plan or publishing a regulation or equivalent by 2026.

We are currently developing a UK cooling outlook document in collaboration with other Government Departments for publication prior to the 2026 target date. We hope this co-ordinated view of cooling in the UK will enable discoveries of new opportunities for innovation in delivering sustainable cooling across sectors of the economy. For the reasons that you give, it is getting warmer here and everywhere else, and cooling will play an increasingly important part in contributing to emissions if we do not get the right technologies in place.

Q33 **Claudia Webbe:** You will be aware that earlier today our Committee published the report of its inquiry into heat resilience and sustainable cooling, in which we call for a comprehensive national heat resilience strategy. Might this be something that could be contained within this plan?

**Graham Stuart:** Let me write to you specifically on that. Unless Alison has the detail, I am afraid—



Q34 **Claudia Webbe:** It would be very helpful if you could. What progress are the Government making on energy efficiency standards for cooling equipment, the very issue that you spoke of? When might minimum efficiency standards be introduced?

**Graham Stuart:** The UK has eco design regulations in place across a number of cooling products, including air conditioners, domestic refrigeration, professional refrigeration and commercial refrigeration. Those regulations introduce Minimum Energy Performance Standards, MEPS, which ensure the lowest energy performing products are removed from the UK market. In terms of updating these standards, my Department is currently undertaking research into commercial refrigeration so that we can update those Minimum Energy Performance Standards, and we will do the same for other products in due course.

Q35 **Claudia Webbe:** Do you still hold by your statement, which you made to the House on the UK's COP priorities, that there would be a goal to double energy efficiency by 2030?

**Graham Stuart:** That is part of the UAE consensus tripling of renewables, doubling of energy efficiency globally. But, as you will know from the sort of architecture, it is then up to countries to determine their own approach to that. Of course, we can be proud of what has happened over the last 13, 14 years, from when only 14% of homes were well insulated in 2010 to the fact that over 50% are today. That is a real transformation, but this shows how much more there is to do.

That is why we are not only spending £6.5 billion in this Parliament but spending another £6 billion over 2025 to 2028, in addition to the obligations that we put on the energy companies through ECO and other schemes—and of course the Great British Insulation Scheme—to drive that forward. The best energy and the cheapest is the energy you do not use because you improve energy efficiency.

Q36 **Claudia Webbe:** One final question from me. Will the Government introduce a takeback scheme to encourage the recycling of cooling equipment, and thereby reduce leakages, particularly of harmful F-gases into the atmosphere? This has been done in countries such as Denmark, France and the Netherlands, and the UK has no such scheme in place. Will the Government commit to introducing a takeback recycling scheme of this nature?

**Graham Stuart:** Last year we published "Maximising Resources, Minimising Waste". As set out in that, the Government's objective is to—precisely as you say—increase reuse, repair and remanufacture of electronic and electrical products and develop options to design out waste using eco design principles, as well as improving levels of collection of waste electronic and electrical equipment.

The Global Cooling Pledge commits to, "Pursue the life cycle management of fluorocarbons in particular addressing HFCs banks, if feasible, such as through the Initiative on Fluorocarbons Lifecycle Management". The UK





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complies with this through the F-gas Regulation 2014, which contains provisions on leakage avoidance and mitigation and end of life recovery for the purpose of recycling, reclamation or destruction.

**Chair:** Thank you very much, Claudia. We will be looking forward to the formal Government response to our report hopefully by Easter.

**Claudia Webbe:** Do you think, Chair, that we might get a Government-run recycling scheme?

**Chair:** It is not for me to prolong that debate, Claudia. We will get a formal Government response within the 60 days, I hope. Caroline Lucas has some more quick questions on finance.

Q37 **Caroline Lucas:** What effect do you think the delay in achieving the £100 billion finance target has on the trust between the developed nations that contribute to the developing nations, which are the recipients?

**Graham Stuart:** It was promised in 2020. It would have been much better if it had been delivered in 2020, but I was pleased—

Q38 **Caroline Lucas:** I think £100 billion was promised a long time before that.

**Graham Stuart:** No. I may have got the date wrong. I think it was about 2009 and people get confused on that in thinking that the year that we set out the target of £100 billion was by 2020. It was announced a long time before but the target—if I have understood correctly—was always 2020. We are not massively off but obviously, when you are dealing with developing countries, let alone small island states, and they do not feel that the rich countries step up, it does undermine confidence. That is why it is so important to work hard and make sure the voices are heard and to make sure that we do what we say we will do.

Q39 **Caroline Lucas:** How big do you think the Loss and Damage Fund needs to be to meet its aims and do you think that can happen while participation in that remains voluntary?

**Graham Stuart:** One of the important things was to see the donor base widened. The trouble is, if it is straightforward donor money from Governments, I cannot give you an immediate figure as to exactly how much loss and damage numbers ideally would be. But they would be very large and outwith any possible amount that could be achieved purely from state donations. I welcome the fact then that the UAE played a big part in that and have contributed to it, so we have moved away from being trapped in the old early 1990s set contribution.

Q40 **Caroline Lucas:** We have had the conversation before about using taxes from aviation or whatever else, but the question was: notwithstanding the fact that state funding on its own will not be enough, do you think that the participation from states should be mandatory for that fund



rather than voluntary?

**Graham Stuart:** The thing we want to do is get it moving as quickly as possible and work out how, through innovative or other approaches, we can start to move it to the kind of quantum that would make a significant difference for those who are most on the frontline. We had the issue of the amount, you then have the issue of who is eligible, as you know, as well as then how it is to be operationalised. We have managed to get quite a lot of that sorted, even though each of those is quite controversial.

Q41 **Caroline Lucas:** You will know that it is expected that the money for that fund should be new and additional. I understand the Government announced that they would commit up to £60 million for that fund, but you know that money is neither new nor additional. It comes from an existing climate finance pot that in turn has been taken from our slashed aid budget. Do you think that does give a sense of climate leadership when it comes to the finance?

**Graham Stuart:** We were pleased, having played our part on the transitional committee, and it was great to see it up and running and operationalised.

Q42 **Caroline Lucas:** The money we are giving is not new and additional, is it?

**Graham Stuart:** As you know, our set-up is that we have to go through our budgetary processes in order to find the money to—

Q43 **Caroline Lucas:** That money is meant to be new and additional. There is no point in setting up a new fund and being very excited about it if some of the money is simply coming from another pot that then gets depleted while we fill this pot.

**Graham Stuart:** Inevitably, unless you create a new form of tax or new innovative finance you will move money from A to B and it will come—

Q44 **Caroline Lucas:** You know perfectly well what I mean, Minister. I am talking about different pots of money for climate. It does not help if you are getting very excited about a new pot of climate money if you are taking that money from an older pot of climate money.

**Graham Stuart:** I think you have made your point.

Q45 **Caroline Lucas:** If I could make one more point, because you will know that the changes to climate finance accounting, which were announced in October, were met with widespread dismay because it is calculated that in a sense this would be a £1.6 billion cut to the £11.6 billion that we had previously committed to climate finance. That is because there has been some quite clever accounting in starting to count things like Multilateral Development Banks' contributions as climate finance. Again, what impact do you think that has on the UK's relationship with climate-vulnerable countries?



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**Graham Stuart:** I do not think it was met with widespread dismay. On the contrary, I think it was an excellent job led by the FCDO in that space and when you—

**Caroline Lucas:** How is it excellent? How is the—

**Chair:** I am sorry, Caroline, we are almost out of time.

**Graham Stuart:** If you want to let me answer; you raise the Multilateral Development Banks. If we are to move to the kind of scale that we want to see in climate finance, we are all agreed—I thought you and I were agreed—that we needed to scale that up. It is not all coming from donors. You push the MDBs to start to do—

Q46 **Caroline Lucas:** You do not simply reclassify the money that you were putting into that bank as climate finance.

**Graham Stuart:** Do you want to give the evidence or shall I?

**Chair:** I am sorry, we will move on to the last question from Chris Grayling.

Q47 **Chris Grayling:** You said that the COPs, important though they are, have turned into something of a jamboree, with vast numbers of people flying all around the world, something that is far more than international negotiation. We now have a plan for a COP in Azerbaijan, so we are doing two oil-producing countries in close succession. We are also taking it to the heart of the Brazilian Amazon, which might be symbolically nice but logistically and in climate terms, frankly, not straightforward and potentially not desirable. Do you think that this is the right approach? Do you think that we should change the way these are done? Should there be a fixed location for them, for example? They are important meetings but is this the right way to do it?

**Graham Stuart:** It is a good question. I have read a number of different articles and opinions on ways of improving the governance. Normally I agree with the sentiment of the writer, whatever their conclusion is, but it is not easy to see what the alternative is because, like trying to change the governance and decision-making, well, if you don't have consensus, you will not move the dial. We have moved the dial, and I may be trapped—having been going since 2005—into believing there is no alternative.

I am open to hear new ideas but, again, if it is always in one place, there may not be the new presidency to inject enthusiasm and life into the thing. Because it has not become this thing that no one notices. When I had my brief sojourn in the Foreign Office I went in August to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the NPT conference. That is probably the most important treaty in the history of humankind, but pretty much nobody knew I went or what happened. I would not like to see that happen on climate. I did not much like seeing it happening to nuclear, which truly is



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existential, however devastating and awful the potential for climate damage is.

**Chair:** Thank you, Chris. We have a very small question from Barry.

Q48 **Barry Gardiner:** Yes. Before Ms Campbell has to leave I wanted to know what she felt the impact of Azerbaijan not having its credentials renewed at the Council of Europe might have as an implication for the COP.

**Alison Campbell:** Azerbaijan have come into the COP presidency quite late, I think we would all agree, at CO28, but they have already started reaching out and engaging. They are trying to set themselves up as an engaged COP presidency, which will be beneficial to us and to everyone. Giving them the time and the space to do that over the next couple of months will be important so that we can all work with them to make sure that COP29 is a success and also support them in doing that. It is not just about the presidency, it is also about the countries who engage with the presidency, and from our perspective that is what we will be focusing on over the next couple of months.

**Chair:** Thank you very much. We are going to have a final very tight question from Sir Christopher Chope.

**Sir Christopher Chope:** On that subject, I was at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe during the debate on Azerbaijan last week, and it is true to say that the members of the delegation of Azerbaijan did not have their credentials renewed. That was because Azerbaijan had refused to allow a delegation from the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly to attend the presidential elections. The presidential elections will take place next month and after that everybody expects that relations will return to normal.

Contrary to the implication of the last question, Azerbaijan has not lost its place as a very important member of the Council of Europe, and it is an increasingly rich country, and it is a growing democracy, and it is good news that they are hosting COP29.

Q49 **Chair:** Thank you for that clarification. Does the Minister want to comment?

**Graham Stuart:** We look forward to working closely with Azerbaijan. Obviously, it is up to the regional grouping. Geopolitical tensions made it look like we were worried about whether it would happen or not. Well, it is happening in Baku, and we look forward to engaging with them.

One of the other benefits of going around the world, and there is plenty of data to show, that countries who host a COP and engage with it end up moving their own policies. So, moving it around regionally, bringing it home, forcing you to look at it properly, analyse the science, gather teams, do the analysis, in which case you come to the conclusion that we have, which is that it is pretty irrefutable and that we need to act. If Azerbaijan becomes a more progressive driver for action on climate



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change, so that more of the world joins the UK on a net zero pathway, we will be delighted.

Q50 **Anna McMorris:** They have not appointed any women to their Climate Committee for COP29 so that is not very progressive.

**Graham Stuart:** I understand that since their first iteration, which had that characteristic, that they have changed it, as well as, I noticed, appointing a parliamentary champion who is also a woman. I think that message has landed with them and obviously we would always encourage them to be diverse and inclusive, and not just in the way that they populate their own staff but in the way that they conduct the whole thing, which needs to be genuinely open to indigenous peoples and other minorities as well.

Q51 **Chair:** Thank you very much, Minister. Before we conclude and allow Alison to catch her plane, I would like to thank you on behalf of the Committee and our sister Committees for the work that you did personally in ensuring that parliamentary delegates from Select Committees were formally accredited to go to COP28, I think for the first time. We are grateful to you, those of us who were able to go, and those who were not were pleased that others could go. I would encourage you to make this a precedent that will be followed by subsequent administrations.

**Graham Stuart:** I trust that not only I, but every member of this Committee can help TO make sure that is the case. As Mr Gardiner and I know from many years of doing this, when you have this enormous carnival shindig thing—when you bring all that expertise together at such expense and with so much climate emissions—you might as well make sure that you properly include the people who often make the political weather and the regulations and drive forward change—namely, national parliamentarians—properly accredited, represented, and recognised within the system.

I thank everybody who has attended and, as you say, I hope we will continue to see—not just from the UK but from other countries—parliamentarians being part of that as we move increasingly into implementation. If we all learn from each other then we can drive change and do so in a way that comes with public consent.

**Chair:** Thank you very much indeed. I know the House authorities would also wish for it to be known that they feel it would be helpful if at least one of the parliamentary Clerks supporting the Committees is able to attend as well. We will perhaps write to you about that. Thank you very much, Alison Campbell, the UK Climate Lead Negotiator for joining us today. Thank you, Minister, for your characteristically robust appearance before the Committee. We look forward to you coming back to us again before too long.