

Environmental Audit Committee

Oral evidence: Outcomes of UNFCCC COP29, HC 667

Monday 27 January 2025

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Members present: Toby Perkins (Chair); Olivia Blake; Julia Buckley; Ellie Chowns; Barry Gardiner; Anna Gelderd; Pippa Heylings; Chris Hinchliff; Martin Rhodes; Blake Stephenson; Alison Taylor; John Whitby.

Questions 1 - 81

Witnesses

I: Rt Hon Ed Miliband MP, Secretary of State, Department for Energy Security and Net Zero; Lee McDonough, Director General, Net Zero, Nuclear and International, Department for Energy Security and Net Zero; and Matt Toombs, Director, International Climate Finance and Strategy, Department for Energy Security and Net Zero.



Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Rt Hon Ed Miliband MP, Lee McDonough and Matt Toombs.

Q1 **Chair:** Welcome, everybody, to the meeting of the Environmental Audit Committee. I am delighted to be joined by the Secretary of State. Thank you, Secretary of State, for joining us. I invite you to introduce yourself and your colleagues and then we will get into the evidence session.

Ed Miliband: I am the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero and it is great to be with you today. On my right I have Lee McDonough, who is the Director General for Net Zero, Nuclear and International in my Department, and Matt Toombs, who is the Director for International Climate.

Q2 **Chair:** Thank you very much. First, primarily for the benefit of people watching our proceedings, it is helpful to explain the approach that the Environmental Audit Committee is taking in today's important session with the Secretary of State. The Environmental Audit Committee plays a unique role in scrutinising and holding to account all Departments in Government for achievement of the Government's legally binding environmental commitments. We do not solely shadow either the Secretary of State's Department or DEFRA. The Secretary of State held an evidence session recently with the DESNZ Select Committee that particularly centred on the Government's clean power 30 plans, so we do not intend to duplicate that session although we may touch on clean power 30.

This session will be held in two parts. The first section will be primarily focused on the UK's contribution to the COP29 negotiation and outcomes, the global leadership that the Government sought to provide and the national and international context to those negotiations. The second part will primarily focus on the Government's net zero policies and governance.

Just as this Committee has a remit to scrutinise Government's performance across all Departments against our commitments, the Secretary of State can be seen as the voice in Cabinet most responsible for ensuring that all Departments are reminded of their responsibilities towards the Government's commitments. We will look to understand how that is carried out in practical terms and how it is going.

Secretary of State, before we go into the detailed scrutiny of the COP29 talks, can you lay out what you see as the national and international context that your Department's policies sit in, please?

Ed Miliband: Thank you very much, Chair. It is great to be with you today. The EAC plays an important role in scrutiny and accountability of Government and has done over the years, so I look forward to working with you.



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We lead the Government's Clean Energy Superpower Mission in DESNZ. It is a foundation for our work at home and abroad. The clean power mission has two limbs. It has clean power by 2030 and accelerating to net zero, or meeting our carbon budgets. It is important to say by way of opening that this is one of the Prime Minister's five missions. We believe that it is a route not just to tackling the climate crisis, which is obviously very important, but also the route to energy security, lower bills, and good jobs and economic growth. Energy security is because we start from the cost of living crisis that so many businesses and families have been through, which showed the dangers from our exposure to fossil fuels. Jobs and economic growth is because we see the clean energy transition as the economic opportunity of our time.

Indeed, this Government see no contradiction between net zero and economic growth. We believe that they go absolutely hand in hand because net zero is a major contributor to growth, or can be, and the climate crisis is the biggest long-term economic threat that our country faces. It does not need to be explained why climate is important for our Department. It is important to say for your work that this is a mission that we lead but that is championed across Government, starting with the Prime Minister and the Chancellor.

I also argue—and this is relevant to what we have tried to do in our first six months—that all of the evidence about our national interest says that we should speed up, not slow down. Geopolitical instability continues to put pressure on energy prices and we need to go all out for clean power. The economic opportunities will go to those who lead, not to those who hang back. Most recently in Los Angeles, we have seen that climate crisis is real. I was doing this job before, in 2008, and it was then talked of as a future threat. It is now present and real and we now know that in 2024 temperatures exceeded 1.5° above pre-industrial levels. It is interesting—and I will come on to some of the challenges in a second—that despite all the difficulties, many other countries recognise that tackling this issue is in their self-interest too. I saw that at COP29, and perhaps we will get into that.

However, I should also be candid to this Committee that the climate consensus at home and abroad is under greater strain than it has been for some time. That is a crucial context for our discussions. In fact, there are siren voices in the UK who say that we should step back from this agenda, that now is the time to give up on climate action because it is not in our national interest. This is a massive fight about the future of our country. I want to be incredibly clear with you about this. This Government are not going to do that, we will not step back, we will not heed those siren voices. We will step up, and we will lead not follow. Why? Because whatever the disinformation, the misinformation, the truth is that climate action is essential for our national self-interest and is supported by the British people.



Finally, I think that we have been at our best as a country when we have reached across parties to take climate action. That is, in a way, the spirit of this Committee. The Climate Change Act that I piloted through in 2008 was supported across parties. My old sparring partner David Cameron—my future sparring partner then—was a supporter. Theresa May legislated for net zero and Alok Sharma played an outstanding role as president of COP26. We want to build as wide a consensus as we can, and we need people from all political parties, business and civil society to make their voices heard, because there is no question that this is a fight. I hope that the reflections are helpful and I look forward to your questions.

Q3 Chair: They are and I am sure that people will question you as we go through this session on the extent to which they are backed up by the actions that the Government take. Going into COP29 you had said that it was a chance for Britain to show global leadership on the environment and on climate change. Can you explain how the Government approached these talks and how you feel that they went?

Ed Miliband: The way we put it is that we can only have energy security at home if we become a clean energy superpower. That is in the interests of today's generations. However, the truth is that we can only have climate security for future generations if we act with others. It is important to say as a starting point that we are 1% of global emissions. Some people would say that that is an excuse for inaction. I think that it is an instruction to global leadership, because only if we work with others can we tackle this problem. Future generations will look back at us and ask, "Were you the people who just didn't get it, who knew about the scale of the problem and didn't act, or did you act?"

We went to COP29 very much in this spirit. It is important that the Prime Minister personally chose to go; some other world leaders did not go. We announced an ambitious new NDC for 2035 of at least 81% reductions. At the G20, following his visit to COP29, the Prime Minister launched a global clean power alliance, which is about countries coming together across the world to speed up the clean energy transition. We reaffirmed the UK's commitment to £11.6 billion of climate finance by 2025-26, which was a previous Government commitment that we were honouring. That is what we did.

Overall I would say that COP29 was not Copenhagen, which was the last summit at which I represented the UK and which ended very badly. It was good that we got the \$300 billion commitment over the line of public and mobilising finance for developing countries. We finally got agreement on article 6 on carbon markets. That has been a decade in the making. We did not get an agreement on building on COP28 and the transition away from fossil fuels. To be frank, we did not get an agreement because lots of developing countries and small island states, in common with us, thought that what was on offer was inadequate. We were not willing to backslide from where we had got to at the UAE in COP28. Therefore, it was a mixed bag.



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Q4 **Chair:** Are you saying on emissions that the reason that we could not get any commitment at all was because the only agreement that we would have got would have been an inadequate one?

Ed Miliband: The specifics of this—which is a debate we will have in the run-up to COP30 in Brazil—is how we take forward the UAE consensus and the global stocktake. In particular there is a lot of interest in paragraph 28, which is about the transition away from fossil fuels and the trebling of renewables by 2030. The feeling of developing countries and progressive developed countries was that the agreement was not strong enough to be assured that that work would be taken forward and that it would be better to wait for Brazil to pick up those discussions and make sure that we can get an ambitious outcome.

Q5 **Chair:** That was a yes to my question, was it, that the reason that we did not get an agreement was because the only agreement would have been inadequate?

Ed Miliband: Correct.

Q6 **Chair:** Excellent. I understand what you say about the developing countries. Why do you think that there were not enough people in the room willing to set an ambitious target?

Ed Miliband: The transition away from fossil fuels is the hardest yards of these negotiations, because you are asking countries to change the way our economies have been run for 200 years.

Q7 **Chair:** Sure, but not overnight. We have spent 15 or 20 years getting to this point. It would be reasonable to say that there was profound disappointment with COP29 on emissions in comparison to where we were just a year or so ago, wouldn't it?

Ed Miliband: I agree with that. These things tend to go in cycles. COP28 represented quite unexpected progress, and the UAE presidency deserves a lot of credit for that, for having driven it forward on the transition away from fossil fuels. However, saying that is one thing, operationalising it is another. It is interesting because in one sense it was disappointing that we did not get a better agreement. However, as you know, Chair, the COP operates by consensus.

Q8 **Chair:** Can you give us a sense of who were the blockers in the room?

Ed Miliband: It would not be diplomatic for me to talk about individual countries in this context. The point that I was going to make was that the centre ground of these negotiations does want ambition. If you think about small island states that are in danger of disappearing, so many developing countries that are worried about their future, there is real opportunity to take this forward in in the run-up to COP30 in Belém.

Q9 **Chair:** In what ways do you feel that the UK led at COP29? What can you point to that would not have happened if we had not provided that leadership?



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Ed Miliband: I will answer this at two levels. First, people might wonder what impact the Prime Minister announcing an ambitious target has. The impact that it has is that the power of example really matters in these negotiations, giving you the authority to negotiate for ambition. Let me unpack that. When we passed the Climate Change Act in 2008, it was copied around the world. There are something like 25 countries that have equivalents of the Climate Change Committee and we were the first. As we strive to achieve clean power by 2030, other countries will hopefully be inspired by our example. It also gives you the authority to negotiate because people cannot say, "Hang on a minute, you're saying one thing abroad but you are doing another".

Specifically on the negotiations, I did my bit, two nights without much sleep and all of that jazz that come with these things, but we have a brilliant team of civil servants, and the respect for our team of civil servants—one of the heads of our negotiations, Alison Campbell, has just been poached by the UN because she is so good. We are in there at the table, a trusted partner, arguing for ambition, pushing further and trying to find ways of bridging gaps in negotiations. It is right that that is our role.

Q10 **Chair:** On the question of those speaking for the UK, it was reported that the UK included 20 fossil fuel lobbyists in its delegation to COP29. Was that true? If so, does that undermine your attempt to promote the UK as a climate leader?

Ed Miliband: I am not aware of that.

Chair: You have not heard that claim before?

Ed Miliband: I had not heard that. The truth is that there are some people who come as part of our team as civil servants and there are other people who get passes via the UK.

Chair: A civil servant and a fossil fuel lobbyist are different things.

Ed Miliband: I do not know. I can write to the Committee about that. I am not aware of that. I would be very surprised if we were doing that, very surprised.

Q11 **Chair:** Accepting that you are not certain on that, do you agree with me that if it was true that within the UK delegation there were 20 fossil fuel lobbyists—maybe your colleagues will be able to answer that—that would potentially undermine the sense that we were there providing—

Ed Miliband: That is not what we do, that is not what we go into the negotiations to do. Let me say in this context that we are a Government that committed in our manifesto to new licences to explore new fields. This is a world-leading position. I don't think that there is any doubt about UK leadership on this question.

Q12 **Chair:** Can either of your colleagues confirm or deny that claim?



Ed Miliband: We will write to you about it.

Matt Toombs: I can come in and say that part of the UK delegation included businesses, academia, devolved Administrations, overseas territories and a range of different parties, but those who were part of business were either supporting the pavilion itself or were part of events at the pavilion.

Ed Miliband: Chair, this is genuinely a non-issue. People around the world recognise that the UK is going into this with a very ambitious agenda, including on fossil fuels.

Q13 **Julia Buckley:** What role can the UK play in international climate action now that President Trump has once again pulled the US out of the Paris agreement?

Ed Miliband: My position is that we want as many countries as possible in the Paris agreement. It is important to say something, though, about the atmosphere at COP29. I know that some members of the Committee will have been there. This is an unstoppable transition. This is genuinely an unstoppable transition because countries recognise that it is in their national interest to do this.

As an example, I do not think that China does everything right on these matters, but it also installed 277 GW of solar last year. By anyone's measure, that is absolutely huge. That is as much as the US has installed of solar in its whole history. That is just one example. President Trump had been elected, he was then President-elect Trump, and the mood at COP29 was very much countries coming with their national self-interest and moving forward. I think that we will continue to move forward. We will seek to find common ground with the new US Administration. Renewables investment went up in the first Trump term.

I want as many countries as possible in the Paris agreement. It is a really important agreement, but this is an unstoppable transition. It is not going nearly fast enough but it is unstoppable and we can seek to find common ground with the new US Administration.

Q14 **Julia Buckley:** In the absence of the US, if China takes a more prominent role, what scope is there for constructive UK collaboration with China to achieve good climate outcomes for the UK?

Ed Miliband: The truth about this on China is that there is no solution to the climate crisis without China, because it represents such a huge level of global emissions now. This is the point that my US friends, Democrats and Republicans, make. Therefore, of course part of what we have to do as a UK Government is work with China, among many other countries, to drive forward climate ambition.

Q15 **Julia Buckley:** Turning to the EU, the UK has an obligation to co-operate with the EU on climate and trade and on international negotiations. What work are you doing to work with the EU to push that forward on these



shared international climate objectives?

Ed Miliband: It is a good point. Wopke Hoekstra, the EU representative at the talks, and I worked closely, along with John Podesta, the US envoy, and Brazil, the future hosts of COP30. Where these talks have succeeded best is when you have developed countries that want ambition, or blocs of countries, working with the vulnerable and developing countries, that see the existential threat, to drive that forward. That was very much what did not happen at Copenhagen and did happen in Paris. It happened a bit with the finance goal, the NCQG, at COP29. That is what we are doing. Relations with the EU are very important in this.

Q16 **Julia Buckley:** Is it an opportunity for closer alignment on some of our environmental standards?

Ed Miliband: There is a separate discussion, separate from the COP process, about how we can work with the European Union for our economic benefit, including in these areas on energy. However, the reality of the negotiations is that it is crucial that we work incredibly closely with the EU.

Q17 **Julia Buckley:** What are your international climate leadership priorities between now and COP30 in Brazil and how do you plan to achieve them?

Ed Miliband: There are two things. First, it is important not to forget that this is the year when countries will submit their nationally determined contributions for 2035. This will tell us how far off track from 1.5° we are going into the future. I am going to India next month and I am already in touch with the new Brazilian presidency. Working with countries on how you can have an NDC campaign to request, urge, the highest levels of ambition is the first point.

The second point is to follow up on the outcomes of COP29, including on the \$1.3 trillion roadmap for developing countries. I know that the Committee has looked at this. The \$300 billion is the core and one of the things that came out of COP29 is working on the roadmap to \$1.3 trillion. This is so much part of the answer, because public money does play a role, including through the MDBs, the multilateral development banks.

Also, how do you mobilise private finance? This is the big change from when I was last doing this job. Now for the significant majority of the world, by some estimates, new renewables are cheaper than new fossil fuels. That is true in theory but you will not be able to do that if you are a developing country that has only a very high cost of capital. Therefore, mobilising private finance to help those countries to make the transition is crucial and I think that the City of London could play an important role. They are two big priorities.

Q18 **Julia Buckley:** We will come on to some more detailed questions on that. It sounds like an ambitious agenda for the next COP and you will need some support on that. Will you commit to including



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parliamentarians from relevant Select Committees in the UK delegation to COP30?

Ed Miliband: Yes, 100% definitely. The passes are on their way to you now.

Q19 **Martin Rhodes:** Secretary of State, you mentioned the ambitious NDC for 2035. I want to ask a couple of questions about the detail behind that about when we are likely to see the timetable for that plan. Will it be adhering to the best practice guidance set out by the UN in its Framework Convention on Climate Change?

Ed Miliband: On the latter, I am sure. Maybe Lee would like to say something about that, but I am sure that that will be the case.

Lee McDonough: It will be the case.

Ed Miliband: It will be the case, good. On the first question, what is interesting about this is some cross-party consensus, which might be a bit unexpected. I will say Boris Johnson for a second. He legislated in 2021 for the carbon budget 6 for 2035. It was a pretty ambitious target. Therefore, lots of the groundwork for what the Prime Minister announced at COP29 is an equivalent target to what was in carbon budget 6, 78%. It is 81% in the UN terms. That is the basis of the NDC. We will publish later on this year our carbon budget plan for carbon budget 6, which essentially underlies the NDC. We are also submitting in February, or quite soon, as part of a UN process, but I can write to you with more detail on that. That is the basic timescale.

Q20 **Martin Rhodes:** How do you plan to ensure that those plans align with the UK's domestic and international goals on biodiversity and nature?

Ed Miliband: It is absolutely crucial to us that biodiversity and nature is aligned with this. In fact, nature-positive solutions are a crucial part of meeting our carbon budgets. Perhaps we will come on to this. Peatland restoration, tree planting and sustainable forestry, all of those things—this is an important point about nature and biodiversity, which is that nature and biodiversity are massively under threat but also nature-positive solutions are a crucial part of meeting our carbon budgets. We are working very closely with DEFRA on that.

Lee McDonough: That is the essence. DEFRA is responsible for that contribution. It is part of our overall net zero strategy domestically and we work with it very closely to understand what it will deliver as its contribution. As the Secretary of State said, to make sure that the solutions that we are doing for other sectors are nature positive, we have a very good relationship with it. From an international perspective, our international climate finance has a significant amount of money related to forests. Matt can say more about that but there is a strong connection between the two sides.



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The Secretary of State has not yet mentioned that we have Rachel Kyte and Ruth Davis, who are the new nature and climate special representatives, bringing those two things together. You are right that they need to be linked.

Q21 Martin Rhodes: You mentioned about working with other Departments. On achieving the ambitious targets of the NDC, a lot of policy areas will have devolved areas with the devolved nations and Administrations of the UK. How are you working with them to ensure that we put together the plan to deliver on this ambitious set of targets?

Lee McDonough: We work very closely with them. The CCC, as you know, is across the UK and supports and provides advice to the different Administrations. We have regular meetings at director level and DG level and we have a ministerial grouping that meets every so often to make sure that we understand where we are collectively on the UK targets. We have a good relationship with them and we work very closely together on the macro position and on some of the detailed policies as well.

Ed Miliband: It has been a big part of what I have tried to do in the last six months. The Prime Minister has led on this. We have a very different approach to devolved Administrations but we can learn masses from each other. There are lots and lots of issues that cross Governments. We have not only had the formal meetings but also a lot of informal context as well.

Q22 Ellie Chowns: Hello, Secretary of State. You have talked about the 81% NDC commitment by 2035. Could you clarify, if international aviation and shipping emissions were included, what would the UK's emissions cut be by 2035?

Matt Toombs: The difference essentially between the 81% and the 78% is excluding international aviation and shipping in the NDC. There is a small adjustment for including the overseas territories and Crown dependencies.

Ed Miliband: I want to be very clear about this. In our carbon budgets we include international aviation and domestic aviation. That is the way that we think about our carbon budgets and our targets. The only reason the NDC was submitted on a different basis was because that is the basis for the UN submission. That is not Government policy. Government policy is to include aviation in our carbon budgets.

Q23 Ellie Chowns: To clarify, the reason for the difference between 78% and 81% is purely a number-crunching reason, it is not a substantive reason. It is just about what is included in the numbers.

Ed Miliband: Indeed.

Q24 Ellie Chowns: On the point about including international aviation and shipping emissions within our carbon budgets, as you pointed out, under the previous Government it was agreed that that would be done, but



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secondary legislation needs to be brought forward to operationalise it properly, as I understand it. That was promised back in 2021 and has not yet been done. Can you confirm when you will bring that secondary legislation forward?

Ed Miliband: This has recently been drawn to my attention. I want to give you an absolutely categorical assurance that all of the discussions and the basis on which we operate as a Government are to include aviation within carbon budgets. It is also right to say that the carbon budget delivery plan that the last Government published—it did not go so well for them—included aviation as part of it. There is a formality that needs to be gone through and we will come back to you on the timing but it will happen.

Q25 **Ellie Chowns:** Could I press you slightly, Secretary of State? It is a formality but it is a fundamental piece of legislation that has been missing in action for four years.

Ed Miliband: Sure. It will not be missing in action for long.

Q26 **Ellie Chowns:** Can you give us a timescale, Secretary of State?

Ed Miliband: I will come back to you on the timescale but I can absolutely assure you that it will happen.

Q27 **Ellie Chowns:** Can you give us a timescale for when you will give us an answer on the timescale?

Ed Miliband: I will come back to you shortly on the timescale, but it will happen.

Q28 **Barry Gardiner:** At the COP this year, it was a pleasure to have so many people coming up to us saying that it was great to have the UK back at the table. I want to open with that because it has shown that other countries have appreciated the fact that the Government have set off front foot from day one.

I want to ask you about the new collective quantified goal. You will be only too aware that it will require a trebling of the previous target to achieve that \$300 billion in climate finance every year by 2035. How will the UK contribute towards that? Specifically on that, will it be predominantly grant funding or loan funding? If it is loan funding, will it be concessional loans or non-concessional?

Ed Miliband: The scale of the UK contribution in the years ahead, as you know, Barry, will be determined as part of the spending review. The global goal was set as part of COP29 but the detail of individual countries' contributions comes after.

You raise an important issue, which was very striking to me in the negotiations, that the quality of finance is as important to developing and vulnerable countries as the quantity of finance, in particular the role of grants not just loans, the issues of how quickly access to finance can be



got and also, crucially, whether there is proper finance for adaptation as well as mitigation.

Q29 **Barry Gardiner:** In the last year that was quantified, 69% of developed countries' climate finance was in the form of non-concessional loans, which is pretty bloody useless to many of the countries, if you will excuse the phrase, Chair.

Ed Miliband: There is a lot of detail in the agreement, which was there after discussions with many developing and vulnerable countries, about these issues of quality of finance. They are something that we are taking seriously. Rachel Kyte has incredible experience from the World Bank and is playing an important role on that, but it is a point well taken.

Q30 **Barry Gardiner:** Let's start talking figures. Under the International Climate Fund 3, which is ringfenced in our ODA, we have £11.6 billion currently allocated for climate-related ODA. Within that, as you know because I wrote to you two weeks ago about it, there is a separate ringfence for biodiversity, or the nature-based solutions that you were talking about earlier, which is for £3 billion. I am not trying to predict what will happen in the spending review, but we have signed up to a package that says that there should be \$300 billion a year by 2035, which is a tripling of what has gone before. Whatever is reflected in the spending review, one way of trying to maximise the amount of money that goes through from this country is if we can leverage private sector and philanthropic funding against what we give. Germany has done it with its living landscapes fund. The US just legislated in December to have their international—

Ed Miliband: Sorry to interject. Is this through public finance mobilising private and philanthropic finance?

Barry Gardiner: Indeed, but specifically around that ringfenced element of ICF 3 at the moment, which is £3 billion. Whatever that translates to in ICF 4—I am not trying to interfere with your discussions with Rachel here although on other areas I might be keen to—if we could designate it for an international climate fund in the way that Germany and the US have done, we can leverage many more billions into it. That has been shown by what they have done. I wrote to you about it, along with 32 other colleagues, our Select Committee Chair and many of the people around this table. It would be good to know that this is being taken seriously by your Department, DEFRA and the other Departments involved.

Ed Miliband: This is a very detailed set of questions but it sounds like exactly the creative solutions that we need in this area. Taking seriously how we do this scaling-up is crucial because we have to bridge quite a big gap here. One of the things that this process has yielded is a big stepping up by the multilateral development banks. I had a meeting with them in New York about making sure that they stepped up. They set out their own target for 2030, which was really good and showed the way that



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they could scale up. Barry, because this is a level of detail as I would expect, let me take it away and we will come back to you.

- Q31 **Barry Gardiner:** One final thing. You were good enough to talk about the importance of cross-party working and you praised previous leaders of the Conservative party and Alok Sharma, who did an excellent job. In 2022 he put a marker down against the Mozambique LNG project, which is a major risk to the UK's international reputation. This is about UK export finance. It would be producing the same emissions as the EU produces in one year and it is mired in issues on human rights as well. Can I ask you to have conversations with the Secretary of State for Business and International Trade to ensure that we do not tarnish the good reputation that I started off by talking about, having regained that at COP29, by providing the £900 million of export credit that this was slated for?

Ed Miliband: Let me take that away.

Barry Gardiner: Please, and perhaps you could write to us about that. If we are going to show leadership, it has to be across the board. This is one way in which other countries would look and say, "They do it if it is in their financial interest".

- Q32 **Blake Stephenson:** Secretary of State, the new collective quantified goal target has a stretch target of \$1.3 trillion of climate finance per year by 2035. How feasible is it that the \$1.3 trillion target will be met on time, if at all?

Ed Miliband: It is interesting because I have some history in this, as in a number of things. I was part of the setting of the \$100 billion goal, along with Gordon Brown, in 2009. The \$100 billion was met late but it has been met, with some of the problems that Barry talked about. It is stretching, the \$1.3 trillion. It is broadly consistent with the Stern-Songwe report. They had a higher public finance number but they recognised that there was the need for this scaling up. We just need to give it our best shot, because it is crucial for the reasons that I have said.

In a way, it is important that this is not about simply saying that we can only provide this amount of public finance and the rest will have to come from private. It is a reality that we need to find ways in which we work with the private sector so that the private sector delivers in investing in developing countries in renewable energy, among other areas, because otherwise we will not help to make this transition work. It is hard. The route map is important, the global clear power alliance will play an important role in supporting this and we have to give it our best shot.

- Q33 **Blake Stephenson:** Do you think that the \$1.3 trillion is likely to be enough to enable the recipient countries to respond and adapt to the impacts of climate change?

Ed Miliband: It is a number that is derived from the Stern-Songwe report. That was the number that they set out, the independent and high-



level expert group. All of the evidence is that the climate crisis is accelerating and that the needs of vulnerable countries are greater, but this is a very, very substantial sum of money and we have to get on with the process of making it real. That is the trust issue here between developed and developing countries—will these promises be kept? I think that it is good that we set the \$100 billion goal. We would not have got to \$100 billion if we had not set the goal. It was a forcing mechanism and this is another forcing mechanism.

Q34 Blake Stephenson: How are you planning to ensure that the UK's recorded contribution to international climate finance commitments is expressly linked to climate relief initiatives rather than broader humanitarian commitments?

Ed Miliband: It is good that we fulfilled the promise of the last Government on the £11.6 billion. We are proud of the work that the ICF does and we are completely committed to ensuring that when we put forward resources for climate, they are indeed for climate purposes.

It is also important to say that as part of this agreement, for the first time multilateral development bank flows from countries like China will be included in the \$300 billion. That is a big change from where we had been. It is good and it reflects the changing economics, the changing situation. Absolutely we want high integrity in the contribution that we put forward.

Q35 Blake Stephenson: Earlier when Barry was asking questions, there was a conversation about public versus private. You may not want to go into too much detail but what do you think the public finance contribution will be?

Ed Miliband: From the UK? That is a matter for the spending review. Remember, the way that it works is that we have a development, an ODA budget, and the climate contribution comes out of that ODA budget. The work is obviously with the Treasury but the work is also with the Foreign Office. It is worth saying that Anneliese Dodds and David Lammy are big supporters of this agenda.

Lee McDonough: There is a cross-government process going on now, which FCDO chairs, to make sure that we are all joined up and can put coherent advice to our sets of Ministers ahead of the spending review on this process.

Q36 Alison Taylor: Thank you, Secretary of State, for coming along today. The next section is on climate adaptation. The UN Environment Programme puts the adaptation finance gap at between \$187 billion and \$359 billion per year. However, adaptation outcomes at COP29 were limited. How urgent is the need to get adequate global adaptation finance in place, given the immense finance gap there is now?

Ed Miliband: It is a very important question and goes to what I said to Barry earlier. Part of the challenge here is that adaptation finance has



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tended to be underfunded compared to mitigation finance. That has been a big source of understandable anger. There were important commitments made as part of COP29 about making sure that we scale up adaptation finance as well as the overall global total. The needs of adaptation are massive. These across the board are massive, but there is a good basis for making sure that as part of the \$300 billion, adaptation plays more of a part in that overall sum.

Q37 Alison Taylor: Will the Government be revising and strengthening the third national adaptation programme in light of the criticisms outlined by the Climate Change Committee in its independent assessment last year?

Ed Miliband: This is about domestic adaptation?

Alison Taylor: Yes.

Ed Miliband: Yes, and it is something that we are working on across Government. As you know, it sits in DEFRA but we work closely with it on that. We are very much looking at this and it will be a big focus of what we look at in the spending review.

Q38 Alison Taylor: Can you say or have you thought yet if there is a particular process that will be followed and if there are any timescales associated with that?

Ed Miliband: A lot of this sits in DEFRA. This is not directly part of the carbon budget process, but I talk to my colleague Steve Reed about it and we are determined to work on it together.

Q39 Chair: Thank you very much. We come now to the second section of today's session, looking more generally at net zero and the seventh carbon budget's process and governance more generally. The previous Prime Minister agreed that effective delivery of policies to achieve the sixth carbon budget had been hampered by a lack of pre-legislative scrutiny. His Administration committed to allowing this Committee to play a key role in the proposals for the seventh carbon budget. Is that commitment still in place under this Government, Secretary of State?

Ed Miliband: I absolutely think that this Committee has a central role when it comes to carbon budget 7. As you know, Chair, the recommendations from the Climate Change Committee will be coming out next month. I want to put on record that I am determined and completely aligned on the idea that we need a process, that this Committee has an important role to play, that we support Parliament having a proper chance to debate these issues and having the proper information to make the decisions on carbon budget 7. I look forward to this Committee kicking off the process. As you know, the deadline to legislate is June 2026.

Q40 Chair: To clarify, does the commitment that was made stay in place or are you suggesting a different approach?



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Ed Miliband: We endorse the commitment to proper information for Parliament to debate these issues. We want it to happen and will make sure it happens.

Q41 **Chair:** How do you envisage Select Committees contributing with parliamentary scrutiny of that proposal?

Ed Miliband: The Climate Change Committee will be coming out with its recommendations very shortly. The Government will then undertake a quite complex cross-government process in advance of the deadline of June 2026 to set out their response. However, in the meantime I would welcome your role in scrutinising the recommendations of the Climate Change Committee, kicking the tyres on what it is saying, and it would significantly help us. I see it as an important part of the process of scrutiny that Parliament does.

Q42 **Chair:** Great. As you say, the Climate Change Committee will make its recommendations in February. When do you anticipate that we will hear the Government's own expectation?

Ed Miliband: Parliament will have a proper chance of scrutiny sufficiently in advance of the June 2026 deadline. I will not put a date on it today but it is fair to say that the Government need to have a thorough examination of the proposals that come out from the Climate Change Committee. I envisage that taking some time because this is a very significant set of recommendations. It covers 2038 to 2042.

Q43 **Chair:** My birthday is on 12 August. Do you think you might have it in time for that?

Ed Miliband: My instincts are that we will need a bit longer than that. We have our carbon budget delivery plan that will come out later on this year. I think that we will need a proper process of cross-government scrutiny of these recommendations.

Q44 **Chair:** Will the Government publish their own delivery plan on how these will be achieved, alongside their proposals for the seventh carbon budget, or will they come later?

Ed Miliband: The Climate Change Act envisages publication after the delivery of the carbon budget delivery plan, after the setting of the budget. We can get hung up on the terms here. I think that Parliament needs enough information from what we say to make an informed judgment about whether what we recommend, following the CCC's recommendations, is the right thing for the country. I undertake that we will do absolutely what is necessary for Parliament to make that judgment.

Q45 **Chair:** To clarify, if I have understood you correctly, you are suggesting that the Climate Change Committee announcement should be the starting gun for this Committee and that we will subsequently at some point, in the latter stages of this year, maybe or maybe not in time for my



birthday, get the announcement—

Ed Miliband: Probably not in time for your birthday.

Chair: What else could I want?

Ed Miliband: We will think of another birthday present for you. I think that what you say about this Committee playing an incredibly important role in this process of scrutiny is right and I genuinely welcome it.

Q46 **Ellie Chowns:** To follow up on that, clearly we have an important role in scrutinising what the CCC advises and arguably an equally if not more important role in scrutinising what the Government propose as carbon budget and as delivery plan. Will you commit, Secretary of State, to coming back to this Committee after you have published your carbon budget proposals to answer questions from us before laying it before the House?

Ed Miliband: Sorry, just explain what you mean by before laying it. Before laying what?

Ellie Chowns: Before bringing a carbon budget—

Ed Miliband: Let me come back to the Committee on the precise chronologies, but I definitely commit to coming back before this Committee to discuss our proposals.

Q47 **Ellie Chowns:** Great, thank you. Can you commit to ensuring a debate in the full House, of at least half a day, on the proposals?

Ed Miliband: I think that there should definitely be a debate in the House. To give a bit of clarity, my understanding about this last time is that the Government put down an SI proposing carbon budget 6 and we supported it and it went through. The last Government got themselves into a slightly odd position in that they blamed the Government for not having a proper debate. Well, they were the Government. Yes, I am happy to do that.

Q48 **Ellie Chowns:** Is it not the case that part of the reason that this has been an issue is the lack of a delivery plan to match the carbon budget? We have ended up in a situation with targets that the Government's plans have been found to be woefully lacking to meet. That arguably suggests that it is important, even though the Climate Change Act does not specify it, for the Government to come forward with a clear delivery plan to go with carbon budget 7 so that we can know how we will get to our goals. Goals without a plan to reach them may not be very effective.

Ed Miliband: Yes, but let's get to the truth here, which is that the last Government set the targets and then did not do the work. We have come to office—and I am glad that we have got on to this—with only one-third of the reductions necessary covered by credible plans, according to the CCC. I will be honest with you that we face a choice. We could have said that the last Government have left us in the lurch so let's downgrade our



targets. That was not the choice that we have made because I think that would be the wrong thing for the country. However, you are right that we are now running to catch up with what we have inherited. I am not sure that it is the case that what happened is about the process.

The other point is that in 2026 we will be 12 years away from the beginning of the carbon budget 7 period, so we need to take away and think carefully about the right level of information that we can provide. It has to be enough information that Parliament can make an informed judgment on these issues, but when we get to the carbon budget delivery plan we will come back to you on it.

- Q49 **Ellie Chowns:** Thanks, Secretary of State. As you pointed out, you inherited a woeful situation in which there are completely inadequate plans for meeting the existing targets. In that context—and specifically referring back to what you said in answer to the first question on COP29, which was that you cannot say you are saying one thing and doing another—do you agree that major infrastructure investment decisions or permission decisions, such as for example airport expansion, should not be taken before we get the forthcoming advice this month from the Climate Change Committee? Are policies such as airport expansion, as the Climate Change Committee previously said, incompatible with meeting the targets we already have?

Ed Miliband: Let me answer this carefully, because it is important, and I will go into a bit of detail on this if I may. This is the heart of the matter on one of the most important issues on aviation. The way that I have always thought about this is that our goal is neither on the one hand to stop people going on holiday or stop the economy getting what it needs, nor is it business as usual as if climate change is not a problem. That is a sensible middle ground of this debate. To make that a reality, we have a system in this country of carbon budgets. It is important to say that any decisions about airport expansions take place within that framework. That is a legally binding framework passed by the 2008 Climate Change Act. This Government are committed to upholding the rule of law. Therefore, any decisions on aviation expansion must be made within that framework. Any aviation expansion will only be able to go ahead if it is consistent with our carbon budgets.

- Q50 **Ellie Chowns:** The Climate Change Committee in its previous advice said that airport expansion was not consistent with our carbon budget. What has changed?

Ed Miliband: The Climate Change Committee's progress report said that no airport expansion should take place without a UK-wide capacity management framework. I agree with the CCC, and I want to be absolutely clear about this, that any aviation expansion must be accounted for as part of carbon budgets. On its balanced pathway was a 25% increase in passenger numbers by 2050.

Ellie Chowns: That is within existing airport capacity.



Ed Miliband: We have a range of mechanisms to make sure that any aviation expansion is consistent with our carbon budgets. I think that we agree about this; it may not look like it. Any aviation expansion must be justified within the framework of carbon budgets. I can absolutely assure you that that is the position of the Government and that is the basis, without anticipating anything that might be announced or might not be announced, on which the Government stand.

Q51 **Ellie Chowns:** In that case, Secretary of State, given that aviation expansion will increase emissions from the aviation sector, which sectors are you suggesting should contract their emissions even further to accommodate any proposed airport expansion?

Ed Miliband: That is a specific question about the pathway of aviation emissions and that depends on a whole range of factors, as you will know, including the use of sustainable aviation fuel, airport efficiency and what other decisions are made. However, I want to provide reassurance, because you made an important point. Carbon budget 7 comes out next month. That will be very important because it will give a greater sense of the pathway for framing decisions the Government make. I want to provide this element of reassurance to you, which is that 100% any aviation expansion must be justified within carbon budgets. If it cannot be justified it will not go ahead.

Q52 **Ellie Chowns:** Thank you. One final question on this.

Chair: We need to move on.

Ellie Chowns: Very briefly, based on what you have just said, Secretary of State, does that mean that the Government will make no announcements on airport expansion until the advice from the CCC has been published next month to provide that framework?

Ed Miliband: I will not get ahead of any announcements that might or might not be made, but I want to give you very strong reassurance that the Government's position is very clear. It goes back to the conversation that we had earlier. Aviation expansion, if it happens, where it happens, must be justified by reference to carbon budgets.

It goes to the broader point and it is important to make this point, which is that we are absolutely committed to growth as our No. 1 mission. We are also, because it is part of our mission shared across Government by the Prime Minister and by the Chancellor, absolutely committed to making good on our mission on not just clean power by 2030 but accelerating to net zero and meeting our carbon budgets. That is a whole of Government commitment.

Q53 **Olivia Blake:** Welcome, Secretary of State. I want to ask about something that happened today. Cornwall Insight has released a report that says that the Government will miss their 2030 clean power target by 32 GW, equivalent to tens of millions of homes' worth of power. Do you recognise that figure and do you agree with the report's conclusion that



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we are off track?

Ed Miliband: No.

Olivia Blake: Okay.

Ed Miliband: Let me be a bit more expansive than that.

Chair: We value brevity here.

Ed Miliband: You do value brevity but let me be not so brief. The NESO, the National Energy System Operator, provided us independent advice saying that it is really hard. Of course the 2030 clean power is hard. If it was easy, the last Government might have done it. It is hard and it is challenging but it is doable and it is absolutely the right thing for the country, our energy security, climate and so on.

Q54 **Olivia Blake:** Several organisations and bodies are involved in overseeing the delivery of clean power by 2030, including Mission Control, NESO, the Clean Power 2030 Advisory Commission, the Clean Power Mission Board, the AI Energy Council and your own Department. Who ultimately has responsibility for the oversight?

Ed Miliband: I am responsible for delivering clean power by 2030. I lead the mission. It is the first limb of the five missions of the Prime Minister. I am accountable to him for delivering this. Within our Department, we have set up an important body, Mission Control, led by Chris Stark, who was chief executive of the Climate Change Committee. This learns from the Vaccine Taskforce. I have talked quite a lot to Patrick Vallance about this. It is outsiders and civil servants working together with a clear mission to drive through Government.

If you think about the pace we have moved at—I will not give you the long list because of the interests of brevity—we produced our clean power action plan within five or so months of coming to office because we are determined to drive this forward.

Q55 **Olivia Blake:** To drill down a bit more, how are you avoiding overlap and duplication among all the organisations that have oversight?

Ed Miliband: The danger is less duplication and more silos. The clean power Mission Control is good because it brings together all the work in my Department that is relevant to clean power. Then we are also well served by the mission boards. I chair the mission board for our mission. The deputy chair is the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Pat McFadden. That is good because—and again, it learns a bit from the Vaccine Taskforce—if there are blockages across Government, the mission board working with the Cabinet Office, breaks down the barriers and will superpower this forward.

Q56 **Olivia Blake:** It sounds like you feel that something would be lost with this suggestion, but would it be easier to run the whole mission out of



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your Department, working across Government and with stakeholders as necessary rather than the situation we have? It sounds as though you do not agree with that.

Ed Miliband: We run both limbs of the mission out of our Department. I want to be absolutely clear in case it is not clear that that is absolutely the case. It is also the case—and I know you understand this—that we rely on working with lots of other parts of Government. I will be frank with you. We are co-operating fantastically. Planning reform has been a crucial part of it. If you think about skills, we are working closely with the Department for Education to make sure we have the skilled workforce to deliver this. I am working closely with the Business Secretary on some of the industrial aspects of this. There is good co-operation across Government and we have good mechanisms in place to make it a reality.

Q57 **Olivia Blake:** Would you improve anything?

Ed Miliband: No. The truth is it is moving at speed. That is what we have tried to do since we came to office: lifting the onshore wind ban, consenting all the solar, the renewables auction, the clean power action plan. All those are about speeding this up. It is interesting, in contrast to Cornwall Insight, that two years ago industry was sceptical about whether 2030 clean power is achievable. The mood has changed. Talk to the National Grid, the NESO, others and they say that it is hard but it is achievable. That shows the galvanising influence that you can have by acting and moving quickly.

Q58 **Olivia Blake:** Did Cornwall Insight get it massively wrong?

Ed Miliband: Yes.

Q59 **John Whitby:** Secretary of State, following on nicely, a key part of the Government's approach, as you have already stated, to delivering net zero is the clean power by 2030 mission. How do you respond to the National Energy System Operator's contention that delivery of key elements of that plan "are at the limits of what is feasible"?

Ed Miliband: They are right that it is hard. It is hard. It is interesting that when we came to office, there was no plan for clean power, never mind by 2030, by 2050. We are taking a different approach.

To be brief on this, we are setting out how much of each power source we need, which is set out in the clean power action plan. That is new. Nobody has done that before. We are restructuring the grid queue. If you are relevant to 2030, you will get good treatment and preferential treatment, but we will deliver what we need, including by region. We are orienting planning reform to deliver 2030, including by making it part of the energy national policy statements. Then we are fashioning the skills strategy and the supply chain strategy.



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We are doing what I call plan and build, not neglect and delay. We are taking a much more intentional approach to this because it is hard. If we do not do it, we are more at risk on energy security and on climate. That is why it is so important.

Q60 John Whitby: With that in mind, I think I know the answer to this question, but is it realistic to think that all the elements of this mission can and will be delivered simultaneously and at pace?

Ed Miliband: Yes. I am absolutely convinced of that. We set a deliberately stretching target. It is partly based on my experience. It goes back to some of the conversations we had earlier. Setting a target a long way away does not exactly increase the pressure to deliver. This has a massive virtue because it is driving progress through Government. It is driving industry to think, "These people are serious, let's invest". It is driving decisions on the next contract for difference or AR7. That is what is important about it.

Q61 John Whitby: As clean power by 2030 is a core element of delivering net zero, is there a plan B for net zero if we do not hit all the clean power targets?

Ed Miliband: I am convinced that we can do it. It is important to net zero, but I am convinced we can do it. Maybe we will come on to this. We have to do clean power by 2030 and we have to do lots of other things as well to deliver our carbon budgets.

It is interesting that electricity demand will only grow, something like 50% by 2035, maybe doubling by 2050. We are entering the age of electricity. Will that be clean electricity or not? Some people will disagree with me. They will say we should not have done 2030, but we will need all this infrastructure anyway because of the scale of the need. We are moving to a different system, a much more electricity-heavy system, and so this infrastructure and everything we are doing is needed, whatever exact position you take on this.

Q62 Anna Gelderd: Welcome, Secretary of State. We have touched on the importance of the upcoming spending review. The National Audit Office has recommended that environment and climate considerations be embedded into the forthcoming spending review and into departmental business planning processes. How will you ensure that net zero considerations will be embedded in the decision-making processes in that review? In particular, rural areas like south-east Cornwall with older housing stock and a high proportion of off-gas homes face significant challenges to decarbonisation. How will you ensure that no areas are left behind in that process?

Ed Miliband: That question has two parts. On the first, it is very much part of the spending review process. I know from talking to the key Secretaries of State, and indeed working with Rachel Reeves and Darren Jones, the Chief Secretary, that we want this to be a mission-oriented



spending review and that the missions get important priority in this spending review. That has been a clear message from the centre to Secretaries of State. I know also from my discussions with other Secretaries of State that they recognise the importance of this and the need to do their bit. As I said earlier, given the inheritance that we have, this is hard. 2030 is hard and this is pretty hard too, because of where we are starting from, but that is very much a priority for the spending review.

On your question about those off the gas grid and so on, we have to look at creative solutions here. We will publish plans later this year on our warm homes plan. It is fair to say that this will require quite a big change in how the Government do things. It is about a much bigger role for mayors and local authorities to help delivery because the record so far is that they will be better at delivering. We need a proper process of advice and guidance for consumers about how they navigate through this thicket of confusion. There needs to be proper regulation and audit to make sure that when work is done, it is done properly. Absolutely, we need to ensure fairness when it comes to rural and urban areas.

Q63 Anna Gelderd: That is welcome to hear. As you are working to ensure that it is embedded within the spending review, how are you working to embed net zero requirements across all Departments as well? We have heard that you are working in a joined-up approach, but it would be good to hear more about how you are working with all Departments ahead of the spending review.

Ed Miliband: Lee wants to come in, but it is interesting. This may not be as widely known as it might be, but there are what we call effort shares for each sector. It is by sector rather than Department, for obvious reasons of interactions. This is an inheritance from the last Government. That is quite an important guide for Secretaries of State: where am I on my effort share; how far behind am I; what do we need to do to catch up? This process is quite embedded. It is hard for the reasons that I have set out, but is definitely embedded.

Lee McDonough: You are spot on. I was going to say the same. This pathway is established in the net zero strategy published in 2021 and it sets out the pathway to carbon budget 6. Departments have sets of responsibilities. They are required to have sets of plans underneath them. As the Secretary of State said, it is hard, but that way of working is well established. As I said earlier, we have a lot of engagement because, ultimately, the Secretary of State is responsible under the Climate Change Act for saying whether we have a plan and where we are on our carbon budgets. It all feeds into that process. That applies to the carbon accounting and also to our approach to the spending review to make sure that we have a cross-government position on understanding the decisions that are made to support the measures in the plan.



Q64 **Pippa Heylings:** Secretary of State, you said in your response to the Committee on Climate Change's 2024 progress report on reducing emissions that this mission-driven, mission-led Government was key to tackling the greatest global long-term challenge, which is the twin crises of climate and nature. It is different to what we have had before, which was about the carbon budget and each of the sectors having to say. The climate and nature crisis puts an additional framework on that and perhaps a challenge.

It was good to hear what you said to the Committee on Climate Change. Then last Friday, the Climate and Nature Bill, a private Member's Bill, came forward. It was therefore, consistent to hear that you are committed in that, cross-party, to rebuild this political consensus. You will bring an annual statement to Parliament and the country on climate and nature to reaffirm that commitment.

If so, how would that integrate and breach the gap at the moment between the carbon budget delivery plans and the environmental improvement plans? What is your thinking so far on how those can be taken together?

Ed Miliband: In the interests of engagement and learning from this Committee, I am interested in your advice and thoughts on this. I will tell you my thinking. I want to pay tribute to Roz Savage and her co-sponsors for the work she did. One co-sponsor is in the room.

Pippa Heylings: Me, too.

Ed Miliband: You, too. I pay tribute to both of you for the important initiative. I felt on coming to office that we have all this information in my Department about the climate crisis and DEFRA has a huge amount of information about the nature crisis, but we do not tell the country about it. The Met Office issues a report on climate once a year, which gets a bit of coverage in *The Guardian*.

Genuinely, I welcome your guidance on this. My intention is that there should be an annual moment when we say to Parliament, "This is what we know as a Government about the scale of this crisis and, also, crucially, this is what we are doing as a Government and this is what you can do as the public". It goes to a public participation issue, which we need to do more on. That is the thinking behind it, but I want to take advice from a range of people about this.

I feel that I sit on this information in my Department about what is going on and—I hate to say it—about how bad things are and how quickly things are moving. I have a responsibility to tell the country about it.

Q65 **Pippa Heylings:** We would welcome as a Committee being able to engage in the future about how that is taken forward. Both yours and, as you say, the state of nature report and the need to say not only what the state is but what we are doing about it. You have the environmental



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improvement plans and the carbon budget delivery plans, suggesting that we need to look at those two. The Climate and Nature Bill was trying to say that they have to look at how they integrate and where they cross over.

Perhaps that leads to the next question. There is consternation, having heard about the mission-led approach, cross-departmental, that the Treasury will announce deregulation and will disempower regulatory bodies to take away red tape, which could be environmental safeguards and high-carbon actions. How do you see that this climate and nature commitment is not just in DESNZ and DEFRA but across all Departments? You have the effort share because of the carbon budget but not within nature. How can we make sure that this is for all of those? As you say, they are inextricably linked.

Ed Miliband: That is an important question. This sense of mission is shared across the Government. I will come to nature in a second because it is important. When you think about clean energy and economic growth or net zero more broadly and economic growth, speeding up the building of our clean energy infrastructure is important and a big driver of economic growth. The other thing I was going to say about nature is that it can be done nature-positively, genuinely.

Pippa Heylings: You aspire to that, but we are taking away all the regulation and safeguards around it.

Ed Miliband: We have to be slightly careful. I am not sure. The headlines can sometimes tell a different story to the truth. I do not accept that characterisation. When you think about how we build offshore wind nature-positively, there are ways to do it. We are thinking about the funds that can make that happen, including the developers playing a part in that. When you think about solar, which is controversial in some quarters, you can also combine that with nature-positive solutions.

A fair challenge is that my Department is an energy security and net zero Department. Nature sits in DEFRA. Your question is an important reminder that all the time we have to make sure they are integrated. I will give you one example of that. Craig Bennett, a well-known champion of nature, is in the Clean Power Unit as one of the clean power commissioners working with Chris Stark to be a check and a balance to make sure that what we do on clean energy is done nature-positively.

Q66 **Pippa Heylings:** Finally on that, as you say, it is taking everyone with us and it is a national conversation. At the moment, that political coalition, together with the environmental movement, has been ready to step up to those roles. There is this moment of consternation within the environmental movement given the announcements that are about to come out. What can be done to ensure honest and productive relationships and to rebuild the political consensus that we need across Departments and across parties?



Ed Miliband: I take seriously working with business, civil society and people across parties. I will be honest with you. I am not sure this is the kind of thing you normally say at a Committee. I lost at the election in 2015, as some of you may remember. One reason I am still in politics is I care so much about this issue, but I do not have a monopoly of wisdom. It is incredibly important to reach out across parties and also across civil society and to hear the voices of those groups—and I do not always agree with them—that advocate on behalf of nature, for example. We had a good dialogue when I was in opposition and I have continued that dialogue when I have been in government. The British people care about these issues.

Q67 **Chair:** On that, I welcome what you say about the need to have a candid discussion on nature with the population and about the idea of an annual moment.

We had recently the Office for Environmental Protection report, which I accept is a DEFRA responsibility. After that pretty stark report, we had no statement here in Parliament from your colleagues. The previous year's OEP report was responded to by the Government only in the last week that they had a statutory responsibility to do so. It feels like there is a disconnect from your desire as the DESNZ Secretary to have this candid discussion. The Government have had opportunities to front up to the discussion on nature. This Government came in in July and took six months from then to respond to the previous report. They have not had a statement on this year's report. Do you see the disconnect between what you say and what we see?

Ed Miliband: I am not aware of the details of what you are talking about. My colleague Steve Reed is committed to this agenda. He is working on the important land use framework, which people have talked about year after year and will happen quite soon. That is important.

I will speak for myself, Chair. I want this annual statement to be a statement to Parliament and the public. People are subjected to such a blizzard of noise, but there have to be standout moments when people get a sense of an honest appraisal of Government, where things are at, what we are doing and what they can do. I will be frank with you. I have discussed this idea with Roz Savage and others. She was keen on the idea and we talked about it on Friday. I am interested in good advice about how we can make this work.

Q68 **Chair:** Would the publication of the Office for Environmental Protection annual report be an ideal moment to do that? Can I suggest the Government consider that next time?

Ed Miliband: We will look at that.

Q69 **Chris Hinchliff:** Secretary of State, I have some final philosophical mopping up from my side.



Ed Miliband: As if we have not become philosophical enough and more people are leaving. It is like people leaving the stadium.

Chris Hinchliff: They are, perhaps quite rightly. You have repeatedly said that we can meet our growth mission and keep within our carbon budgets. Since 2015, global GDP growth has been associated with an increase in carbon dioxide-equivalent emissions every single year, apart from in 2020 during covid. The Energy Institute's latest annual review of world energy showed a new record in the consumption of fossil fuels. What discussions have you had with the Chancellor and others across Government on the maximum environmentally sustainable GDP we can maintain?

Ed Miliband: It is interesting, Chris. You cite global figures, and I am sure they are right, but in the UK—I do not have the figures to hand—there has been a massive and stark decoupling of economic growth from carbon emissions. We have not grown nearly as much as we could have done as a country but while there has been economic growth over the last 30 or 40 years, there has been a rapid—50%, broadly—reduction in our greenhouse gas emissions. That tells you it can be done.

I want to make this point. Our offer to the world or to the British people cannot be we can't grow any more, because that will mean people's standards of living will fall. Our message has to be we can grow, but we have to do it consistently with the drive to net zero. We absolutely can do that.

Q70 **Chris Hinchliff:** Secretary of State, you know as well as I do that while there has been technical decoupling within our own economy, our demands impact resource consumption overseas, impact land use change overseas and lead to overseas industrial activity. I do not want to get drawn into this too much, but the Government's position is that infinite exponential increases in consumption of resources on a finite planet are possible.

Ed Miliband: I am not sure I would put it that way. Even if you take account of our consumption emissions, our emissions have gone down. In other words, the 50% is measured based on production emissions, but consumption emissions have also fallen. I am not saying this infinite thing that you said, but the people who care about this issue are going down a blind alley if we are saying to people, "We can't grow any more", particularly people in the developing world and in Britain.

Q71 **Chris Hinchliff:** To move on to a specific point, the Chancellor of the Exchequer is recently reported to have said that growth trumps everything. Does the work of the Growth Mission Board take priority over the Clean Energy Mission Board?

Ed Miliband: I saw how the Chancellor was quoted on that and she has since made it clear that she believes that the two are absolutely consistent. I will be frank with you. She has been one of the biggest



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supporters of the clean energy mission and net zero. She has put it at the centre of her philosophy about how our economy grows.

We are not supposed to talk about these things, but we have had a joint meeting of the Growth Mission Board and the Clean Energy Mission Board precisely because of how we see the two as going together. Honestly, we see the two as absolutely consistent.

Q72 Chris Hinchliff: Last week, similarly, the Chancellor said that for the sake of growth, the answer cannot always be no when it comes to approving major infrastructure works.

Ed Miliband: She is right about that.

Chris Hinchliff: The more important question for my constituents who are concerned about our local environment is whether, under this Government, the answer can ever be no.

Ed Miliband: Yes, it can. I will be frank with you. On the decision about whether to build clean energy infrastructure, the climate crisis is a much bigger threat to the countryside and wildlife and biodiversity. It is a much bigger threat than solar farms or pylons. We have to have this debate because if you are worried about biodiversity, if you are worried about nature, you should be worried about climate change.

Chris Hinchliff: I am in absolute agreement there, but you did answer my question at the beginning. The answer can be no, although we accept the wider point that you make.

Ed Miliband: Of course.

Q73 Chris Hinchliff: To return briefly to the point around aviation, you have said that the CCC's advice on aviation expansion is absolutely the position of the Government. That referred to bringing forward an airport capacity management framework. Do the Government intend to bring that forward?

Ed Miliband: I read that CCC wants to ensure that any decisions on aviation are taken within a carbon budget framework. That is the Government's position.

Q74 Chris Hinchliff: Have you assessed or are you aware of the research by the New Economics Foundation that approving the expansion of Luton and Gatwick airports would wipe out the climate benefit of the Government's clean power plan by 2050?

Ed Miliband: I will not get into specifics of particular airport projects.

Q75 Chris Hinchliff: Then I will finally move on to last point. As the co-chair of the AI Energy Council, how are you ensuring that the rollout of new data centres to support AI across the country does not compromise climate objectives due to energy demand?



Ed Miliband: The National Energy System Operator has assessed this and thinks that it can absolutely be accommodated. It has an assessment going forward to 2030 and then assessments beyond that but there is more uncertainty beyond that. It believes, when you look at the scale of the demand, that it absolutely can be accommodated.

However, the AI Energy Council was set up precisely so that we can have a proper assessment of the demands and where they will be in the country, look at how those can be met and ensure—and this maybe had less attention—that the role of AI in making our energy system more efficient can be properly used.

Q76 **Chris Hinchliff:** As a final point, I take it that the name is the AI Energy Council, but in your discussions on the resource demands of AI and data centres in the future, do you have discussions on water resources as well given the pressure on our water resources in this country? Is that being considered in those discussions?

Ed Miliband: The council is just getting going and so we will make sure we look at that.

Q77 **Chair:** On the question about the airports, the DfT analysis in 2020—and I imagine it has not changed hugely—said that the expansion of Heathrow would mean a shift of 27,000 jobs and £42 billion in GDP from other regions to London and the south-east. As the MP for Doncaster North, if it is still called that, you have, I believe, supported the plans for Doncaster airport. Were you in despair when you heard this announcement about Heathrow expansion or do you feel that it does not undermine what you are trying to achieve?

Ed Miliband: You are tempting, Chair. I have always thought that, but you will not tempt me into speculation on this question about Heathrow.

Chair: You are not leaping to defend it. You are choosing not to answer it.

Ed Miliband: There is public debate on these questions, but the Government will make their intentions clear at the appropriate moment. It is not helpful for me to speculate.

Q78 **Chair:** You are still supporting the Doncaster expansion?

Ed Miliband: Yes. It goes back to the point I made earlier and I have always thought this, including 15 years ago when I was last doing this job. There are two edge positions, which are that people should never be flying and that we can carry on with total business as usual. I subscribe to neither position. The right position—and this is the CCC's position, to go back to the question earlier—is to have this within a framework.

I might add that when we debated this previously, going back to the question earlier, it is relatively recent that aviation, including



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international aviation, was included in carbon budgets. That was a positive step, but it has to be accounted for within that framework.

Ellie Chowns: I have three brief questions. Two are following up on Chris, but one is prompted by your question there, if that is all right, Chair.

Ed Miliband: We are in injury time.

Q79 **Ellie Chowns:** Secretary of State, given the discussion that has just been prompted again, would you support the introduction of a frequent flyer levy as a policy situated in between the two extremes?

Ed Miliband: I am sorry. These are matters of tax policy and they are definitely not matters for me. They are matters for the Treasury.

Q80 **Ellie Chowns:** They are, arguably, highly relevant to your portfolio, but we will move on. In response to a question from Chris, you talked in glowing terms about the decarbonisation of the UK economy over the past 30 to 40 years. Of course, you will be super well aware that that is in significant part due to a one-off and unrepeatable decarbonisation of the electricity system as we have moved away from coal and increasingly away from other forms of fossil fuels. Therefore, it is, arguably, not a good demonstration of the principle that economic growth can be decoupled from emissions. Indeed, in a number of sectors, notably transport, that has not happened. Could you comment on the sectors where you are most concerned about the struggle to decouple emissions from growth?

Ed Miliband: You make an important point. I suppose it is in less glowing terms because no country has done enough. It is more making the point about decoupling. The truth is that the power sector has seen a significant fall in emissions, but in the rest of the sectors—industry, agriculture, buildings, transport—we have significantly underperformed. We have to do better. I agree with you 100%. We have to do better.

When you think about what this Government has done since we came into office, we have restored the ICE phase-out date of 2030. We have made big advances in investing in carbon capture and storage and in hydrogen. We have taken action on a warmer homes plan. We have changed the heat pump one-metre rule.

We absolutely see it as our job and my job working with other Secretaries of State—it is hard—to drive up what we do, drive up performance and drive down emissions elsewhere, not just in the power sector.

Q81 **Ellie Chowns:** Finally, you referred to consumption emissions versus territorial emissions. We use territorial in the debates on carbon budgets and so forth. Particular sectors have quite significant differences. Do you feel that we do not pay enough attention to consumption emissions? What shifts would you like to see in how the UK measures and addresses



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emissions, recognising the sometimes significant difference between consumption and territorial?

Ed Miliband: You are right. We do not pay enough attention to them. The UN framework that we work within is done based on production emissions, partly because of issues of national sovereignty, but it is right. On Roz Savage's Bill, it is one area that we said we would look at. It is also part of the industrial side of this because my view is that decarbonisation is the route to reindustrialisation not deindustrialisation. Therefore, you definitely do not want to simply export your emissions to other countries.

I do not have an answer on this, but we should definitely take it more seriously as we think about the policy landscape and policy decision making.

Chair: Secretary of State, Ms McDonough and Mr Toombs, thank you very much for your evidence today and for responding to the questions fully and candidly. We appreciate your attendance.