

## Scottish Affairs Committee

### Oral evidence: [COP26: delivering a successful COP26 in Glasgow, HC 1323](#)

Thursday 25 March 2021

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Members present: Pete Wishart (Chair); Mhairi Black; Andrew Bowie; Deidre Brock; Wendy Chamberlain; Alberto Costa; Jon Cruddas; Sally-Ann Hart; John Lamont; Douglas Ross.

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#### Witnesses

[I](#): Bernard Higgins, Assistant Chief Constable, Police Scotland; Colin Edgar, Head of Communication and Strategic Partnerships, Glasgow City Council; and Leon Thompson, Government and Parliamentary Affairs Manager, VisitScotland.



## Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Bernard Higgins, Colin Edgar and Leon Thompson.

Q1 **Chair:** Welcome to the Scottish Affairs Committee in the first of our evidence sessions on the run-up and preparations for COP26 in Glasgow. We are looking particularly this morning at some of the organisational issues, the planning and the opportunities it might present Scotland for being a showcase internationally.

We are delighted that we have some fantastic guests joining us this morning. I will let them introduce themselves and say anything by way of a short introductory statement, if necessary. We will start with you, Mr Thompson.

**Leon Thompson:** Good morning. Thank you very much for inviting me along here today. I am the Government and Parliamentary Affairs Manager at VisitScotland. As an opening remark, I will say that COP26 presents a number of excellent opportunities for Scotland to position itself as a sustainable tourism destination.

**Chair:** Excellent. How about you, Assistant Chief Constable?

**Bernard Higgins:** Good morning. Again, thank you for the invite. I am Bernard Higgins, Assistant Chief Constable with Police Scotland and the Police Gold Commander for Operation Urram, which is the police operation for the COP26 event. As an opening remark, I will simply say that COP26 presents a unique policing challenge and will probably be one of the biggest policing and safety operations in recent years to ever visit the United Kingdom.

**Chair:** Thank you for that. Lastly, Mr Edgar.

**Colin Edgar:** Good morning, Chair, and thank you. I am Glasgow City Council's Head of Communication and Strategic Partnerships. As such, I have been appointed as the city council's senior responsible officer for the council's responsibilities in respect of COP26. By way of introduction, I think I will cut a middle line between your other two witnesses and say that there are huge opportunities for the city but also huge challenges. I think we need to work together to maximise one and minimise the other.

Q2 **Chair:** Excellent. We will start with you, Mr Edgar, on that very issue. This is a huge opportunity for Glasgow. There will be people all around the world tuning in to see this event and world leaders coming from every corner of the globe to participate. There will be news cameras coming from every single sector. I think that we are all immensely excited about the many opportunities this creates. What impression are you hoping to create for Glasgow around this event and will event contributors ensure that Scotland is perceived as a world-class host?

**Colin Edgar:** There are a couple of things. The first is—it risks sounding slightly flippant and I really don't mean it to—that I think it is very important and it is greatly to be hoped that COP26 will deliver a legacy



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for the whole planet with a meaningful and achievable agreement. The opportunity that is presented to Glasgow and Scotland in having Glasgow's name attached to that agreement is huge, so if the agreement is as far reaching as we all hope it will be, the word "Glasgow" will be forever attached to a sense of the world taking control of its own destiny and finally deciding to deal with the environmental challenges that we have put on the planet ourselves.

First, that will simply make people feel good about themselves. That is always a good thing, but I think one of the opportunities that we hope to take from this is that we will be able to sell the city to investors and to the rest of the world as a place that is forward looking in how it deals with the environment; if you want to invest in a city and a country that takes a responsible view of the environment and is at the cutting edge of how we deal with the environmental problems we face, you want to come to Glasgow. Having Glasgow's name attached to that agreement will take us over that first hurdle. We will never have to explain to people that Glasgow is a place that is committed to the environment because you will see the word "Glasgow" right on the front cover of the agreement when it is signed. I don't think it is a small thing that the agreement will come to be called the Glasgow agreement.

The other opportunities are simply as you say, that the world will be watching us. That gives us an opportunity to talk to people. We have already been having conversations with people since it was announced that COP was coming to Glasgow. It should have been last year and obviously now it will be this year. We have had opportunities to have the leader of the council speaking to conferences with, for example, the mayor of Paris and the mayor of Pittsburgh, other world cities that are known and renowned. We are now starting to be talked about in the same breath as those cities.

We are about to appoint an environmental economy manager who will be going out into the world with our Invest Glasgow team to look for investable opportunities, to look for people who have money to spend and are looking for a place to spend it. Again, having COP coming to Glasgow is a great tool in being able to explain to people that we are the kind of city that they want to come to. I think that the greatest opportunities we see for the city are economic opportunities. There is a host of other opportunities we can talk about for tourism and in how we engage with our own environment. You might want to talk about that later, but I think the first one is that our name will be known more around the world.

**Q3 Chair:** Thank you for that. That was a very comprehensive response. I will ask the same theme of question to Mr Thompson, with a larger one: what will this do for Scotland and how will our tourist enterprises and industry take advantage of this opportunity? Can you tell us a bit about your thinking on all of this?



**Leon Thompson:** VisitScotland has already started the process of beginning to focus on responsible tourism, which is very much a central part of everything that we are doing now through our marketing and promotion. We are working with a number of bodies around the world to highlight Scotland's credentials in sustainable and responsible tourism.

In November last year we signed up to Tourism Declares, which is a partnership approach to get tourism agencies and bodies to help tackle the climate emergency. We were the first national tourism organisation to do that and I think that we are still the only national tourism organisation out of the 230 or so organisations that are listed on Tourism Declares. We have worked with partners, Sail Scotland and Wild Scotland, to get involved there as well. We have already started the process of talking about Scotland as a leading sustainable tourism destination and we are getting quite a lot of interest from other national tourism organisations around the world in the work that we are doing to keep Scotland in that position.

We have four responsible tourism pillars. We are supporting Scotland's transition to a low-carbon economy: so that is the work that we do in encouraging that, but it is also working with businesses to help them make that transition. We are obviously looking at low-carbon transport as part of that and active transport is a key element in there too. The responsible tourism element goes beyond the environment itself so that we are looking at communities as well.

We want to make sure that tourism in Scotland is inclusive. We also want to ensure that tourism continues to contribute to thriving communities around the country. We are very much looking at this in the round and looking at the environmental side of things, but also how responsible tourism can benefit communities across the country.

Q4 **Chair:** Thank you for that. Have you started to think about how this will be assessed, whether you have any sort of measures to see how much of a success this has been? Are these measures that you will be able to put against what you are observing? Tell us how you will assess whether you have achieved objectives for tourism in Scotland.

**Leon Thompson:** It will all link ultimately into the Scottish Government's stated ambition to achieve net zero by 2045, but we also have a tourism strategy, Scotland Outlook 2030, which is heavily focused on responsible and sustainable tourism, and it will link into that. We will start looking at businesses, encouraging them to measure their carbon footprints and encouraging visitors to do likewise. We will be monitoring how our messaging is being received and how that is influencing visitor behaviour as well, which will be key in this. There is a number of measures, and more will be developed as we move through the process.

Q5 **Chair:** Thank you. We will be coming to you, Assistant Chief Constable. I know we have specific questions, so don't feel left out just now—there will be a couple of questions coming your way.



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Lastly from me to Mr Edgar, is Glasgow looking to build on this as a conference centre and location? What are you looking at as ways of success out of all this? Where do you see this in some sort of legacy building and positioning of Glasgow in the future?

**Colin Edgar:** We are very successful with Glasgow as a centre for conferences and major events. We are one of the world's most successful centres for conferencing and the city's convention bureau regularly wins the British convention bureau of the year—I can't remember exactly what the award is called—and it is with such stunning regularity that I can't even remember how many times we have won it. I think 11 or 12 times in a row we have been regarded as the country's best convention bureau.

COP is huge. It is one of the biggest events the UK will ever stage, but I think it should be viewed as being on a continuum for growing Glasgow as a centre for not very regular but reasonably regular mega events. Starting from the Commonwealth Games, the European Championships in 2018, COP this year, we will also be hosting the inaugural world cycling championships in 2023, which we think will be the largest sporting event in the world that year. I think COP is part of a continuum for Glasgow as being a city that is known for events.

On the specific legacy, there is a range of areas where we expect to see a legacy. I have talked a little bit about Glasgow's positioning in the world and the impact that will have on the economy. We also want to use it as a spur and an accelerant to our own environmental ambitions. We will be publishing our Climate Emergency Implementation Plan next month. We are trying to move towards carbon neutrality as a city by 2030. When we host mega events, some things get a physical legacy in that you might build a velodrome, for example, and you will have some employment from it, but we really try to use events to inspire ourselves as an organisation and our citizens to change our behaviour.

There are lots of things that we will do, for example our climate emergency action plan. We are about to procure what we think is the world's largest fleet of hydrogen-powered refuse collection vehicles and a range of other things. You might say, "You could have done them", but having COP acts as a spur to do it, in the same way that the Commonwealth Games acted as a spur to introduce one of the country's biggest apprenticeships programmes and job subsidy programmes.

**Chair:** I am grateful, thank you for that. I will pass across to my colleague, Alberto Costa.

Q6 **Alberto Costa:** Thank you, Chairman. The Chairman just said that the importance of this is for Scotland to be perceived as a world-class host. Gentlemen, as you know, the host of COP26 is officially the United Kingdom, in partnership with Italy. I am the Member of Parliament for South Leicestershire, although Glasgow is my home city. I want to learn from the three of you the work that you are doing, with your sister organisations and other stakeholders across the whole of the UK, for the



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UK, as well as Glasgow of course, to benefit from the UK hosting this important conference. I will start with Mr Edgar, because you said that this is perhaps one of the biggest events that the UK will ever stage. I agree. Can you tell me, Mr Edgar, how you are working with other cities? You talked about world-class cities like Paris. Have you been working with London and other British cities for them to help and benefit as well in the UK hosting this big event?

**Colin Edgar:** Yes, thank you. We are a very active member of the Core Cities network, which is the UK's 10 biggest cities outside London. We are working very closely with them on what the benefits of hosting something like COP are to the UK's cities. The leader of the council is beginning to play a very active role in the C40 network of cities and various other networks of cities around the country. Glasgow, as you know, is the biggest city in Scotland and the powerhouse of the Scottish economy, but for several years now we have regarded ourselves as being one of the UK's premier cities outside of London. London is arguably a world city rather than simply a UK city.

We have regarded ourselves in how we measure success. Our comparators are Manchester, Liverpool, Bristol and Birmingham, rather than being just the Scottish cities. We are working very closely with the other UK cities. You may want to talk about this later, but we are working very closely with the Cabinet Office and other parts of the UK Government on how hopefully the success of the event is a success for the staging of mega events in the UK as a whole.

Q7 **Alberto Costa:** Thank you, Mr Edgar. Can I ask a similar question of you, Mr Thompson? Have you been working with your sister organisations across the UK to ensure that the tourism element of the benefit of staging this mega-global event can really spread the beneficence across the whole of the UK? After all, it is UK taxpayers who are helping to finance and host this Glasgow-based project. I would be very grateful to learn what benefits your sister groups might have and what help they are giving to you.

**Leon Thompson:** VisitScotland works very closely with colleagues in VisitBritain. We have a regular and ongoing relationship with VisitBritain. COP26 and responsible tourism is the topic—the theme—of most of the conversations with VisitBritain at the moment, and similarly with partners in Wales and Northern Ireland. It is about sharing intelligence and consumer insight on how responsible tourism plays out with visitors coming to Britain as a whole. We know that increasingly visitors are looking to come to sustainable destinations that are pushing responsible tourism. Visitors are very keen on the idea of going to destinations where they can have a low impact on the environment while they are there.

As I say, we are working very closely with VisitBritain on this and we will continue to look at potential opportunities with VisitBritain as we get clarity on how the events will run. We are looking at joint marketing and promotion activity as well where we can.



Q8 **Alberto Costa:** On the joint marketing opportunities—for example flags like the Saltire and the Union flag—can you envisage VisitScotland working with VisitBritain in joint promotional material that carries both flags?

**Leon Thompson:** We tend not to carry flags on our promotional material anyway. We have a brand called Scotland Is Now, which we are part of. The relationship in working with VisitBritain is very much about using the Britain dimension when we are engaging with emerging markets, perhaps markets that are not so familiar with the UK and Scotland. But where there are markets that understand Scotland very well, we promote Scotland and the great things that we have here. A lot of it will be about sharing intelligence and approaches around responsible tourism messaging. That is one of the key ones where we will work together.

On liaison with the UK Government via the Scottish Government, we have offered to have colleagues based within the blue zone to offer visitor advice and information to delegates there. We are plugged into the UK Government that way as well.

Q9 **Alberto Costa:** Thank you, Mr Thompson. My final question is to Mr Higgins on the same theme. Mr Higgins, you mentioned that this visit to the UK is one of the biggest policing challenges. You were the first to mention the United Kingdom. Are you working with your sister police forces across the whole of the United Kingdom, given that the United Kingdom is hosting this event in Glasgow?

**Bernard Higgins:** Absolutely, is the answer. Police Scotland is the civil authority in Scotland and we operate in a devolved environment, as you know, but this is a UK event, so I have some challenges in meeting the needs of both UK Government and Scottish Government. I work very closely with the COP unit and Cabinet Office and of course with Scottish Government officials as well.

Colin keeps using the word “mega”, which is a great word to describe this event. It is not often you will hear an assistant chief constable talking about a mega event. I hope the Chief isn’t watching this, but that is exactly what it is. It is literally going to be the biggest policing event possibly since the Olympic Games in London in 2012. The reality is that I cannot deliver the policing operation that is required to make this a safe and secure event without the assistance of UK policing plc. There will be pretty much a 60:40 split of Police Scotland officers and officers from the wider UK forces and they will come to Glasgow on a mutual aid basis. They will be under the command and control of the Chief Constable of Scotland and he has delegated that authority to me. We are working very closely with the National Police Co-ordination Centre and we have already put a first draft of the number of officers and disciplines that we will require support from.

I will say a couple of things on the legacy. If you look back on what UK policing has had to police in recent events, we have had the Olympic



Games, the Commonwealth Heads of Government, G8s, G20s and the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow. This year alone we have G7 in Devon and Cornwall, the European Football Championships in London and COP26 in Glasgow, then projecting into next year, 2022, we have the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham. There is a massive legacy benefit, not just to Police Scotland but all forces across the entire United Kingdom because these events that I have mentioned, with the exception of the football events, simply cannot be delivered unless the host force is supported by the other forces right across Britain.

**Alberto Costa:** Thank you very much, gentlemen, in particular Mr Higgins for the good work that you and Police Scotland are doing with all the other police forces across the United Kingdom to help keep all Britain and all visitors safe as they come to COP26 in Glasgow. It is a great mega UK event and I am glad to see that all stakeholders across the United Kingdom are doing their best to help this work. Thank you, gentlemen, for the evidence that you have given this morning.

Q10 **John Lamont:** Good morning to the witnesses. Mr Higgins, I am going to stick with you, I am afraid. Where are we with the funding that you require to police this event?

**Bernard Higgins:** The funding is a moving feast. We have a ballpark figure, where we are in discussions with the UK Government, but a lot will depend on the final profile of the conference. We have a set of planning assumptions that we have been working to. They are based on a number of world leaders coming at a particular time, which may include the President of the United States and the Holy Father, Pope Francis, which again would escalate the event into something not seen in the United Kingdom in many years. But if those two iconic individuals don't come, our policing plan has to be adjusted accordingly.

The figures shift pretty much monthly, but what has happened—and it has been very helpful—is that the UK Government have introduced a spending approval board that allows me, as gold commander, to go to the UK Government and say, “I need money at this moment in time to put this asset in place or to make these arrangements”, for example money to secure premises that I will be using as a staging post where officers will report to be forward deployed. We have to secure that accommodation, accommodation for hotels and so on. While a final budget has not been approved, I am satisfied that the governance arrangements that the UK Government have put in place allow me, as gold commander, to continue to make decisions and get forward funding or advance funding to allow those decisions to be put in place.

Q11 **John Lamont:** Very good. I know that this is probably quite hard to answer but are you anticipating large-scale demonstrations? I guess you have to cover all eventualities, but what planning is in place for that?

**Bernard Higgins:** I think that, based on current intelligence, some sort of demonstration is inevitable. I have categorised it into four very broad



categories. Category 1 is about the concerned individuals who will turn up with their grandchildren or children and peacefully protest. The second group are individuals who will turn up to protest, not necessarily about climate change but against certain countries because of maybe their human rights record or certain individuals. For example, the President of the United States will always attract some sort of protest because of the office that he holds.

The third type of individual is the climate activist, who will not be afraid to engage in direct action to try to disrupt, so they might lock on to a bridge, abandon a vehicle or try to disrupt the conference. The fourth type of individual is your hard-line anarchist, either extreme right wing or extreme left wing, who potentially will come regardless of the substance of the conference, intent on delivering serious acts of violence and disorder.

My policing plan includes the strategic objective of facilitating peaceful protest. We will facilitate the first three categories, as long as they are not obstructing the delivery of the conference, to the best of our ability. For the fourth category, where it is individuals who are intent on engaging right from the get-go in acts of serious violence and disorder, our policing approach will be quite different. If you consider some of the peaceful protests you have seen recently and contrast them with, for example, the protests in Capitol Hill in Washington, that is how flexible the policing plan has to be. It has to be flexible enough to facilitate the lawful, peaceful protest but also be robust enough to repel any determined violent or riotous behaviour.

**Q12 John Lamont:** That is incredibly helpful. This is a very difficult question. It is very hard to predict where we will be with the pandemic and the Covid rules, but in light of some of the demonstrations and protests that have taken place over the last few weeks, how are you preparing for managing all of that—which you have just described very well—when there are probably still going to be some type of Covid restrictions in place?

**Bernard Higgins:** Police Scotland has an enviable reputation for a lot of things, but our reputation and our ability to safely deliver large-scale events has been tried and tested since our inception. We also are very used to dealing with significant public safety issues and public disorder issues. Sadly, we have had to deal with similar situations to those we have seen in other parts of the country. For example, last summer, the height of the Black Lives Matter rallies and counter-protests, was also at the height of the Covid restrictions. Glasgow and Scotland were not untouched by the same level of protest and counter-protest. We had to deploy in large numbers to police the Black Lives Matters demonstration but also to police the counter-protestors who came out to oppose the BLM movement. We did that at the height of Covid, so we already have a tactical plan about how we could do that during COP26, if necessary.

**Q13 John Lamont:** Turning now to Mr Edgar, what discussions have you had



or has the council had with the Cabinet Office and Alok Sharma on the preparations for COP26?

**Colin Edgar:** Extensive. That is a very long answer to a short question. The general point is that we are well used to engaging with event organisers. Without meaning any disrespect whatsoever to friends I have who work for the Commonwealth Games Federation and all our sporting federations, the Cabinet Office has been the easiest event organiser to work with that we have had in quite a while. It has viewed the position of the city as absolutely central to the success of the event as an event and so the level of engagement we have had with it has been excellent.

The leader of the council has met with the president-designate and I think she is intending to meet with them again in the coming days certainly, if not weeks. Just informally, the relationship between the two of them seems pretty good. I can go into detail about specific elements of discussion if you would like, but there is nothing I would ask for that we are not getting from their engagement with us.

Q14 **John Lamont:** Perfect. There will be approximately 30,000 delegates coming to Glasgow, so there is going to be high demand for accommodation, beds, restaurants, travel, taxis and rail. Thinking about all of that and the pressures that will be put on them because of the extra people coming to the city, what are you having sleepless nights about just now in worrying about it not working properly?

**Colin Edgar:** That is an easy question to answer. For me, the sleepless nights are about the ability of the city to continue to operate under the pressure of having something of this scale dropped on top of it. We came up with a programme during the Commonwealth Games called Get Ready Glasgow, which is our primary communication tool to citizens and businesses for how they will continue to move around and enjoy the city. Get Ready Glasgow is a programme that runs all the time, but we don't use it as a communication channel except when there is something of this scale coming.

We use that as our primary brand for talking to citizens about how they will get in and out and for talking to businesses about how they should organise themselves at the time. Obviously that the city is safe and the event is successful is top of the list, but very close to the top of the list is that we don't make the event a success by shutting down the city. There is a perception—whether it is real or not—that the success of London 2012 was partially based on discouraging people from coming into the city for work or for play.

Our business community, led by the Chamber of Commerce, has been very clear since 2012 that we must not do that, and that we must make sure the traffic flows are not scaring people into staying at home. The tone is very much, "You will be coming into the city. Can we have a conversation with you about how to come into the city? You might usually drive. For the period of this, could you consider coming by train or by bus



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or, even better, by bike?" We are pretty good at that. It is never perfect but it keeps going.

What is keeping me awake at night is Bernie's four categories. I can tell you the date of the world road cycling championships and I know exactly the impact that will have in August 2023. I know exactly the impact that will have on the city and I could start talking to people now about how to prepare for that. I have no idea how Bernie's four groups will behave, so it will be very hard for me to communicate to people, "This is how you should change your behaviour." I can't say, "Tuesday is anarchist day, so get the bus on Tuesday" because the anarchists don't want us to know. I can't say, "Somebody is going to glue themselves to a train in Partick station on Wednesday, so maybe cycle if you would usually use Partick station" because they are not going to tell me when they are going to glue themselves to a train. That is the thing that is keeping me awake at night. Thank you for reminding me of it, because I had forgotten about it momentarily.

**Q15 John Lamont:** I apologise. Mr Thompson. There is concern about the cost of some of the accommodation at the time of the event. How are you working with your members to ensure that there is a range of reasonably priced accommodation for delegates, particularly those coming from poorer countries or those not backed by large corporate or government budgets?

**Leon Thompson:** The UK Government are working through an agency called MCI. It is responsible for booking all the accommodation and I understand that it has largely booked up a lot of the accommodation for the delegates who will be coming. That is obviously across Glasgow, some accommodation in Edinburgh and elsewhere as well. We are not directly involved in any of that or any of the discussions. I imagine, or certainly hope, that when the booking was being made, rates were discussed so that they were kept at realistic levels. For other major or mega events we have had in Scotland in the past, part of the agreement with accommodation providers was that they would be guaranteed bed nights, guests but we required them to hold their prices. That is a question for the UK Government and in particular the agency, MCI, that they are using for those bookings.

**Q16 John Lamont:** To pick up on the point Mr Costa made earlier, if I was to speak to some tourist businesses in Coldstream today, which is where I am, or anywhere in the Borders, what engagement will they have had from you about opportunities and how they might be able to take advantage of this event taking place in Scotland?

**Leon Thompson:** We have regional teams around the country. We have a regional director based in the south, so eventually, once we know the scale and the opportunities that are coming, we will be able to have those conversations with business. Right now we are waiting to hear about how many delegates are likely to be coming and also how big the civic society side of things will be. That will have a bearing on how we take the people



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who are coming for COP and convert them into leisure visitors, perhaps at the end of COP. Those conversations will happen but we probably need a little bit more clarity on the actual size and scale of COP.

**Q17 John Lamont:** I had intended to finish there, but I am just thinking that we are all being encouraged to stay at home and there will be a huge pressure on the domestic market anyway; people are struggling to get beds and accommodation in parts of the UK over the summer because the expectation is that the overseas holiday is not going to happen. Surely any opportunity that COP26 might present to businesses in the Borders might be lost because the rooms are already booked around the same time as this conference.

**Leon Thompson:** Possibly. Across Scotland, and obviously the Borders as well, there is a lot more accommodation available than there used to be if you take Airbnb and Booking.com. There is more accommodation available than there has been at previous times, even back in 2014 when we had the Commonwealth Games and the Ryder Cup. There is more provision available.

**Q18 Chair:** Assistant Chief Constable Higgins, I think we are all very interested in the four categories in your list. I can understand why that might give Mr Edgar some sleepless nights. I was an MP during the last time world leaders came to Scotland for a G8 in 2005, I think it was. There were several conversations then about how protests are either accommodated or clamped down on. What are your plans regarding this? Will you be working with protest groups to make sure that they are accommodated or is there going to be a zero tolerance approach to any protests? Will you engage with them to ensure that people can protest legitimately and that they will be given support and assistance by the police? Can you talk us through what your approach to that will be?

**Bernard Higgins:** Absolutely. You will not find me using the term "zero tolerance" to protest anywhere, with the exception of anarchists who might engage in serious violence or disorder. The truth is that people have the right to assemble and they have the right to air freedom of speech. My job, in a democratic society, is to facilitate peaceful protest as far as reasonably practical. Where we start to get to the line where I need to take more formal action is if that protest then starts to impinge on the delivery of the conference or the wider running of business as usual in Glasgow city and beyond. If there is a protest that blocks the Kingston Bridge, that will bring the Scottish transport system to a grinding halt very quickly, so I could not tolerate that. I would need to move swiftly to get the bridge up and running.

But anybody who wants to come and lobby or protest, as long as we can facilitate that peacefully and safely, it will be accommodated. Interestingly, the United Nations accredit certain protest groups and will invite them into the blue zone daily, so that at 1 o'clock on a Wednesday, Friends of the Earth will be given a half-hour window of opportunity to



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protest within the blue zone. It is very much following on the UN's lead that we will facilitate protests wherever we can.

There are a couple of things you might wish to know about liaison. We have a protest liaison team already in place who, between now and the conference, will be going out and speaking to as many identified groups as it can to explain to them, "This is the Police Scotland approach. This is what we would like to do. How can we facilitate you? This is how you can expect to be treated in Scotland. This is the ethics, the values of Police Scotland in what we stand for and this is how our policing position will be one of facilitation and engagement." We will be doing that between now and the conference, even to the groups that might not necessarily want to engage with us. It won't be for the lack of trying.

In addition, probably about June, the United Nations has already invited me—whether it is virtual or in person is still to be determined—to meet with international protest groups that are likely to attend and again explain the policing approach in Scotland and what they can reasonably expect to be accommodated with and how they can reasonably expect police officers to behave. It is an absolutely fundamental basic action that we have to do in advance. It is effectively a no-surprise approach, so that the protestors know how they will be treated, respectfully and with dignity, and to any degree, anything that they can tell us on what they want to try to achieve, we will facilitate to the best of our ability.

**Chair:** Great. Thank you very much for that very comprehensive response.

**Q19 Andrew Bowie:** Thank you, everybody, for giving up your time this morning. It is fascinating. I had the pleasure of joining the COP26 committee as a guest two weeks ago, listening to the president-designate and the CEO, Peter Hill, and to hear the plans coming together and coming to fruition is fascinating. I declare a small interest in it. I remember being in the room at the very beginning of this process at Downing Street when the then Prime Minister pretty much set the wheels in motion for the UK being the host nation and Glasgow being the host city, so it is great to see things moving as close and as well as this.

Without wanting to give Mr Higgins a heart attack, I want to talk about the fringe of COP26. There has been a lot of discussion around the benefits to Glasgow and the city region, but this might be one for Mr Thompson, talking about how the COP will benefit wider Scotland and taking elements of COP outwith Glasgow to demonstrate the best that we have to offer. I say Scotland, but possibly the rest of the United Kingdom, Glasgow not being too far away from Newcastle and the great technologies it has for developing energy-efficient machinery and all the rest of it, and of course up there in Aberdeen, the energy capital of Europe. Are there any plans to spread COP out of Glasgow in any sense regarding the fringe, although I am fully aware of the difficulties that that would bring to policing and security-wise?



**Bernard Higgins:** Before Mr Thompson, could I give an overview of the policing plan? The policing plan is not confined to Glasgow at all. There are venues in Edinburgh and—

**Chair:** We have lost the Assistant Chief Constable. Sorry, we lost you briefly there, Assistant Chief Constable. I do not know how much we missed of your musings, but Andrew will reframe where we were with that question.

**Andrew Bowie:** You were talking about the policing plan and how it stretches outside Glasgow. That is where you dropped off.

**Bernard Higgins:** I will be very brief then. My plan includes officers deployed to Edinburgh and the north of the country. We have hotels in Fife and Perthshire that we know will be used for designated teams and designated countries. The UK Government are currently looking at a social programme, which again will not necessarily focus on Glasgow, but anything that has a COP banner around it will fall within the policing operation. Right now, I can assure you it pretty much covers the four corners of the country.

Q20 **Andrew Bowie:** Mr Thompson, it was primarily a question directed at you. How will the rest of Scotland benefit from COP26 and are there any plans to take elements of the fringe outside the Glasgow city region?

**Leon Thompson:** We are not one of the delivery partners. We are looking at what the opportunities will be for having delegates see other parts of Scotland during their stay. Obviously not everybody will be staying in Glasgow anyway, so inevitably delegates will want to see or be able to see other parts of the country where they are staying. In an ideal scenario, what we would like to do towards the end or at the end of COP and during COP, when people have free time or some time to go and explore, is to provide them with information and advice on other things that they can do and see in Glasgow, near to Glasgow, wherever they might be staying. There is the opportunity to make sure that people who are staying on for an extended trip have information about other places they can go to so that they can create itineraries for their trip. Our goal is trying to convert the delegates into leisure tourists either during or towards the end of COP itself.

Q21 **Andrew Bowie:** Scotland and the UK as a whole have a great history of delivering fantastic spectacle events, if you think of the Olympic opening ceremony, the Glasgow 2014 opening ceremony and every year you have the military tattoo on the Esplanade. Is there any thinking going into whether you want to bookend COP26 with an event, a ceremony, something that shows off what we have to offer in that respect? I only ask because I think back to the Paris climate change conference and other climate change conferences. It doesn't matter in which fantastic city in which corner of the world they are being held, all you see is the inside of a conference centre and men in dark suits moving from room to room to room. I wondered if there was the opportunity to do something



that captures the media spotlight and shows off what we have to offer in that respect. Is that something that would be considered?

**Leon Thompson:** I am not aware that we are involved in any sort of discussions about opening ceremonies and closing ceremonies. One of the things that we may be engaged in is possibly creating a Scotland house, which we would be creating on behalf of the Scottish Government. Within that, we would be looking to create lots of showcase events that would bring culture, heritage, music, food and drink very much to the fore, obviously with a focus on sustainability and Scotland's position in leading the way there. That is one area that we may be involved in, but at the moment I am not aware that there have been any discussions about anything behind that.

**Colin Edgar:** I might be able to help a little bit there. The opening and closing ceremonies are for the organisers, which is the Cabinet Office along with the UN. That falls very much into their purview, albeit the council and the police and VisitScotland will assist them with their plans. I certainly know that the cultural sector in Glasgow is responding to this. You will see as you move around the city—Covid restrictions notwithstanding—local artist groups taking over space in the city and looking at how we reflect the experience of COP back to the UN with a very Glasgow feel, because it is in Glasgow. I imagine that that will be replicated around the country.

I know that the Cabinet Office, in the shape of the Together for Our Planet programme, is reaching out to people right across the country to say, "What are you doing? Are you doing anything in response to COP that you would want us to partner with you and to talk to you about?" If you are in any part of the UK and you have a project or a programme that you feel is contributory, the Cabinet Office—and you can just go to its website, where it is pretty clear—wants you reach out to talk about how it can contribute.

Q22 **Andrew Bowie:** It crossed my mind when Mr Higgins was speaking earlier about the policing and the fact that the UK has held big events in the past—we have talked about Glasgow 2014, the Olympics and with governmental events such as G8 and NATO conferences—that all of them, in recent years anyway, seem to have been held rurally in places that are rather inaccessible: Gleneagles, Wales, the G7 in Cornwall and a NATO conference in rural England not that long ago. This is surely the first time in a very long time that we have had an intergovernmental conference drawing such senior and sometimes controversial figures as will be attending this conference in as accessible a place as the city centre of a major European city, which we are having this year. Is that the case, Mr Higgins? The stress and strain on the police force compared to the other events I mentioned must be great.

**Bernard Higgins:** We are putting together a very complex operation because the events that you reference there, Mr Bowie, are not open to the public; G7 is a closed event. We have 120 world leaders plus,



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potentially over the two weeks, 30,000 different delegates. To draw a comparison, I went to Madrid to see COP25 and the conference was 40 minutes drive from Madrid city centre. You can get off a train at Glasgow Queen Street and be at the SEC, the Scottish Event Campus, in a leisurely stroll of about 15 or 20 minutes. You are absolutely right that we have to plan for a completely different dynamic. That is why we will have to draw on resources from right across the United Kingdom.

Complacency is the enemy of safety. We are not complacent. UK policing has a very good record of delivering large-scale events. On top of that, Police Scotland has a very good record and reputation for doing it. We will just continue to plan. As the conference is in Glasgow, it will be a wonderful occasion for the city, the country and the wider UK. My job is to work with the United Kingdom Government private security contractors and make sure that the event goes ahead as safely and securely as possible.

**Chair:** Thank you. I have a quick supplementary from John Lamont before we move on to Deidre Brock.

Q23 **John Lamont:** Thanks, Chair. Apologies to colleagues, I wanted to go back to Mr Thompson. I have just been on the VisitScotland website trying to find some information about COP26 and the opportunities for all of our constituents in Scotland and I am struggling to find anything. Am I missing something? Is it there or is it to come?

**Leon Thompson:** It is to come. At the moment we are putting up a lot of stuff around responsible tourism, so that is the initial phase of what we are doing around COP, but more will come as we move through the weeks and months ahead.

Q24 **John Lamont:** There is a gap just now. I am a wee bit surprised. We are months away from this major event, this mega event as our witnesses have referred to, and the VisitScotland website appears to have a bit of a void for this mega event.

**Leon Thompson:** We are putting out a lot of information about our responsible tourism activity. That is going out to consumers around the world, who we have been keeping in touch with, letting them know about Scotland and getting people to start thinking about coming back to Scotland when the time is right. Once we get closer to understanding the opportunities for visitors around COP, we will have more information to share with people then.

Q25 **Deidre Brock:** Thank you to all our witnesses today. It has been fascinating. I had better declare an interest right from the start because I am shadow spokesperson for COP26 for the SNP. The upside is that I have a great interest in this. The downside I suppose is that I have about 100 questions and I am going to have to narrow them all down. I will start off with Mr Thompson. Returning briefly to the issue of accommodation, I think you mentioned that event organisers would normally agree with accommodation co-ordinators—if that is the word for



them—like MCI that rates are kept at a certain level, there would be some sort of arrangement like that. Is that right?

**Leon Thompson:** Potentially. I am not working with MCI. That is obviously a contract that is held by the UK Government, but certainly for past events, the Ryder Cup for example, we work very closely with partners around that, securing accommodation ahead of time so that numbers of rooms are held for people coming for the Ryder Cup. As part of that agreement, rates were kept at normal levels, so there were no price hikes and things of that nature. I am just putting that out there, as that seemed to be good practice for making sure that everybody is getting a fair benefit from hosting COP.

Q26 **Deidre Brock:** Ordinarily, you are saying that VisitScotland would have a liaison role with these accommodation providers, or how does that work?

**Leon Thompson:** No. We were a lead agency during the Ryder Cup. Ordinarily we would not necessarily be involved. For the Commonwealth Games, I think colleagues would have worked very closely with partners in Glasgow on transport, accommodation as well, but we wouldn't necessarily have had any kind of hand in booking accommodation or holding accommodation for people coming. In this case, it is a contract that is held by the UK Government.

Q27 **Deidre Brock:** Indeed. I am not quite clear how these accommodation co-ordinators work. Do they take a percentage rate of the bookings cost or is it a fixed rate that is part of the initial contract?

**Leon Thompson:** I don't know. I don't know anything about the contract that the UK Government holds with MCI. That is a question for them to answer on how that runs.

Q28 **Deidre Brock:** Mr Edgar, you were telling us about the work that has been going on with the UK Government. It is good to hear that there is a good channel established there and that lots is happening. I wondered about the work going on to make sure there are opportunities for people across Scotland to engage with the summit's green zone, which is of course under the management of the presidency, and what is happening there. Questions have been raised with me about what criteria are being used for the organisations that are being accepted or will be accepted into the green zone.

**Colin Edgar:** As you say, it is under the control of the presidency and we have not really been involved in discussions about how people might get permission to be there. I am very sorry; I am not able to help you.

Q29 **Deidre Brock:** Is the council working with local businesses in helping to facilitate their participation in the green zone in the way of the Commonwealth Games? There was a lot of support given to local businesses to try to make sure that they were benefiting from the presence of the games.



**Colin Edgar:** We are working very closely with the Chamber of Commerce, which has a very good relationship obviously with businesses around the city, on how local businesses who have a story to tell in circularity or in sustainability can access the green zone and all the other opportunities that will present themselves. We will have the green zone. We will have—again, Covid restrictions allowing—a presence utilising the city chambers building, which we will make available to stakeholders, including local businesses. The task for the rest of the year is to work with local businesses who have a story to tell in that sector and help them to engage with the organiser but also with the opportunities that present outside of the city as well. That means the organiser but also some of the COP partners, because some of them are Glasgow-based firms, which is very helpful.

Q30 **Deidre Brock:** Yes, of course. Great, thank you. Mr Thompson, you touched on the blue zone and I think maybe that you had offered to have some officers from VisitScotland placed in the blue zone. Was that an offer that you made to the Cabinet Office? Is that part of the Scotland house approach?

**Leon Thompson:** They are two slightly separate things. The Scottish Government, in communication with the Cabinet Office, asked about having personnel from Scotland staffing some of the locations within the blue zone. We offered to look at the possibility of having some of our information team, perhaps, and wider numbers of colleagues available there to primarily be on hand to answer questions about visitor experience and so on and helping delegates consider itineraries to travel around and things to see and do either during COP or afterwards if they were planning to stay on.

Scotland house is slightly different. It is something that we have delivered before during the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow. It becomes a bit of a showcase opportunity for Scotland, pulling in delegates, running meetings and events, and introducing culture and heritage opportunities as well. At the moment, we are not doing anything on that. We are waiting to hear if that is something that the Scottish Government want to go ahead with. It is certainly something that has been raised previously.

Q31 **Deidre Brock:** This is again for you, Mr Thompson. I noted that the economic impact estimate provided for the G7 was about £50 million, and that was from Visit Cornwall. Is VisitScotland doing something or have you done something about the economic impact estimate for Glasgow of COP26?

**Leon Thompson:** It is not something that we have worked on. We are not one of the delivery partners in this. The figure that I have, which was announced I think at the time that Glasgow was announced as the host, was £73 million for hospitality. I have not seen an updated figure on that but that was certainly the figure that was reported in September 2019.



**Q32 Deidre Brock:** You have touched on some of the work VisitScotland is doing online for sustainable living, hospitality and so on. I was in the APPG for hospitality and tourism recently and it was making the point that a lot of intermediary booking companies, like Booking.com, are increasingly highlighting green credentials for their hotels, cafes and restaurants. Is this something that you are pushing and is COP26 helping to encourage it?

**Leon Thompson:** Yes, absolutely. It is something that we have been working on for a number of years. We are heavily engaged with Green Tourism, which is an agency that helps businesses become more sustainable and provides branding for businesses around that. It is something that we push very heavily through our own quality assurance schemes as well. That is a key part of our relationship with businesses through our quality assurance schemes.

We know from our insights and research that visitors are looking for a sustainable and responsible experience, and for many visitors now that is an essential when they are considering destinations they are going to. It is how they can keep their carbon footprint lower during the trips, how they can be sure that their visit is not going to have a detrimental effect on the environment, the built heritage or local communities. These are the things that visitors are considering when booking holidays.

**Deidre Brock:** Yes, and low carbon menus and the like, I believe, as well in restaurants.

**Leon Thompson:** Indeed. We have a big push on using local food and drink as well, keeping air miles down, food and drink that is produced using sustainable methods, and so on.

**Colin Edgar:** On the economic impact, the point raised about the initial estimate of some £70 million was based on an estimate pre-Covid when we could make a fair guess of how many people would be coming to the city, how long they would stay and what they would be able to do. Unfortunately, right now we do not really know. The Cabinet Office is carrying out a bit of a stocktake to work out what will be the response to Covid. After that, we will have a much clearer idea of how many people are going to come, how long they will stay for and what they will be able to do. I know that the Cabinet Office intends, once that work is done, to start to do some more detailed work on the economic impact. I will certainly look forward to seeing that.

**Q33 Deidre Brock:** Mr Edgar, you touched briefly on the fact that you are intending to inspire citizens to change their behaviour. I am sure there is lots of work going on already around that, but it would be interesting to share with the Committee a few examples of what Glasgow City Council is doing in that area.

**Colin Edgar:** There are lots of things that we will be looking to do over the next few years in decarbonising housing, heating and transport. The most recent thing we have tried to talk to people about in the last few



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weeks is the personal changes they can make in their own behaviour to deal with our waste streams. Glasgow does not have a tremendous record in the amount of waste that we are able to divert from landfill. There are all sorts of good reasons for that. The vast percentage of tenement properties we have as part of our housing stock makes it difficult to collect recycling.

What we have tried to do is to link together in people's minds the idea that there are some things that we personally can do to reduce the amount of waste we send to landfill. In parallel with the Government's Together for Our Planet programme, 10 days ago we launched our People Make Glasgow Greener campaign, which will be a campaign that we will run over the course of this year and after COP. The initial focus of that was to talk to people about litter and recycling, because we are trying to ease people into it. Simple things like not dropping litter and using the correct recycling bins are things that people can do that are very low cost and low effort to them. That is what we have started talking to people about.

Over time, we will talk to them more about decarbonising their transport, using more active travel, decarbonising their housing and their heating, but we are starting off with those small personal changes.

**Deidre Brock:** Great, small personal changes but they can make a big difference. Thanks very much.

Q34 **Jon Cruddas:** Good morning, everyone. This follows on from the points that Deidre was raising, a couple of points about the sustainability of the event itself. The UN website states that the UK is committed to delivering a sustainable COP26 and the SEC has published a number of commitments to reducing the environmental impact of the operations, including reduced energy, use of landfill, use of renewables, recycling, sustainable transport, and so on.

Can I ask a couple of points about practical steps to ensure the overall event is in reality net zero? First, in particular does the SEC have any major concerns around sustainability? Will it be possible to effectively manage the fringe events in a sustainable way? I am not sure if there is a specific policing issue there, so maybe it is best directed to Mr Edgar, although Mr Thompson may have something to add.

**Colin Edgar:** I know that discussions about the sustainability of the activity inside the SEC are going on between the Cabinet Office and the SEC. I know that it intends to get the relevant ISO designation, which is one that, as a country, we have already achieved for London 2012 and Glasgow 2014.

For our own events outside the city, we are trying, insofar as we can, to decarbonise our own activities anyway. I mentioned earlier that we are trying to move our refuse fleet over to hydrogen-powered vehicles, but we have also committed to a plastic reduction strategy. We are hoping to



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have removed single-use plastic, certainly from our own operations and ideally from the city as a whole, by next year.

Last year we published a sustainable food strategy, which is about sustainability and that is very important, but we are also trying to do some work around access to food for communities in the city that are far away from it. It is not difficult to see how providing or ensuring access to food for communities in a city is probably more likely to be done in a sustainable way because it will be about providing food more closely to the community. That is a separate strand of work about food.

For our own events that we host we will stick to our sustainable food plan and we are already attempting to remove single-use plastic from our own activity.

**Q35 Jon Cruddas:** Mr Thompson, do you have anything to add about the sustainability of the COP26 experience?

**Leon Thompson:** VisitScotland has made great inroads even before the pandemic in reducing the organisation's carbon footprint. It is something we have been pretty hot on for quite a while. Similarly, when we have been supporting major events, we have worked hard with organisers to ensure that the events are sustainable and that the environment is very much put at the centre of thinking about planning. Any events that we are involved in at COP will certainly build on the experiences that we have had before.

For us, there is also something about behavioural change. The campaign that we are running at the moment around responsible tourism is really getting the message out to Scots, the people in Scotland, that we are looking to behave in a responsible way, sustaining, looking after and being considerate towards the environment and local communities. That is something that we will be spreading out to our wider network of contacts and potential visitors as we move on.

**Q36 Jon Cruddas:** Okay, thanks for that. The management of the environmental impact of operations of the Scottish Event Campus is linked through the Cabinet Office rather than the council.

Mr Edgar, can I specifically ask about the environmental impact of the events for the city, with carbon emissions, air quality and waste management? Is there anything more to add about the council-wide issues there?

**Colin Edgar:** I don't think I have anything more to add just now. No, I don't have anything to add beyond what I said to you before.

**Jon Cruddas:** That is fine by me, Chair. Thanks.

**Q37 Sally-Ann Hart:** Good afternoon to the panel. Assistant Chief Constable Higgins touched on the policing of fringe events and said that COP26 presents a unique policing challenge. Assistant Chief Constable, what concerns do you have around managing the COP26 fringe events? I know



that you said there is Edinburgh and places, but there are obviously going to be quite a lot of fringe events around Glasgow.

**Bernard Higgins:** We will risk assess them, because there may be some events that are of such a low threshold of risk that they will not need any policing response at all. For example, if Glasgow City Council decided that it was going to host a civic event for whoever, we will have a look to see who is going and our response would be quite different if it was the President of the United States or if it was some influential businessman from the Glasgow community. It will really be based on the risk assessment.

Some other events are probably worth noting. I think on the Thursday there is a children's day at the conference. Schoolchildren of all ages from across Scotland and potentially beyond will be coming into the Scottish Event Campus, which again will be a challenging but equally quite colourful and wonderful event. On the middle weekend, either the Saturday or Sunday, the United Nations encourages a climate rally. In excess of 100,000 to 200,000 people will hold a rally, probably in Glasgow. In Madrid, the officials said that 500,000 people walked through the streets of Madrid in this rally.

These are things that are in addition to the main business of the conference and that is what the policing plan is around. It is around assessing the risk, deploying a relevant number of resources and specialist assets as required, but not simply having a scattergun approach and wherever there is a COP event you will see a Police Scotland officer. That is not strictly the case, but we will absolutely be assessing every single event.

Q38 **Sally-Ann Hart:** Thank you. I will move on to Mr Edgar next about the city events programme. You have probably been involved with organising the city events programme. Has there been some significant interest in participation?

**Colin Edgar:** The events programme is somewhat on ice at the minute, as a lot of things are, until we come through the Covid stocktake. We have certainly been having conversations with the Stop Climate Chaos coalition, which wants to have a presence in the city from the civic side of things. We have been discussing with the event partners—the event sponsors if you like—how they will activate in the city and what they intend to do in the city. We have a team of people in our events team who can engage with anyone who wants to play a part in it or hold an event in the city.

If it is okay I will add slightly to what Bernie said. One of the things that we learned from the Commonwealth Games is that at times like these it is important to take a whole city view. Rather than thinking about the roads separately from the refuse separately from the schools separately from traffic and transport, we have appointed a city services manager, a very experienced woman, who will work closely with the police but also



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with the fringe event organisers to look at not just the policing impact but what the impact is on the city, on traffic and transport, refuse collection and people getting to and from their work and school. We are very closely integrated with the police on how we manage these things.

**Sally-Ann Hart:** Mr Thompson, do you have anything to add from VisitScotland on that particular question?

**Leon Thompson:** No, I don't have anything to add to that.

Q39 **Sally-Ann Hart:** Okay, thank you. Mr Edgar, I am going to go back to you. To what extent will the fringe events and the host city events complement each other? Is it the intention to merge the two forums or have them completely separate?

**Colin Edgar:** That is a really interesting question. The UN is not precious about their intellectual property in the way that an IOC or a UEFA or a Commonwealth Games Federation is. Everything that happens in the city will have a COP feel to it and the organisers have been quite generous with us in letting us share and use the branding. You will feel wherever you are that you are involved in COP.

The events that we specifically organise as a city are likely to be centred around the city chambers. We probably will not call it Glasgow house, but the national and city house model is one that is well established in major events and major sporting events. We will do something similar to that. As you would imagine, our focus will be on cities and we will want to provide a platform for other cities to tell their stories in the city at the time.

The Committee asked Bernie earlier about about managing protests. A lot of the stuff that happens in the city will need to be facilitated by us and, as Bernie said earlier, we will try to be as permissive as we can and facilitate things and help them to happen, assuming that they are not unlawful. Again, that is what the city services team will be involved in.

We are hopeful that the city will be really vibrant but that there will be a huge amount of stuff happening in our communities quite organically, without too much of a push from us. We have artists in residence based in every ward in the city and they will be engaging with their local communities on how they respond to COP and use it as an opportunity to tell their own stories.

As I say, I think the fact that the UN is quite permissive about how it allows its product to be talked about means that everyone who does anything in the city at that time will talk about it as a COP event.

Q40 **Sally-Ann Hart:** Looking at the success of COP26, do you think that the fringe events will have an impact on the perception of the success of COP26 in Glasgow, in Scotland and in the United Kingdom? Mr Thompson, is that something you can answer?



**Leon Thompson:** Absolutely. I mentioned at the start of the meeting that for VisitScotland, for tourism in Scotland, it is a great opportunity to show where the country is, not just in the debate but actions and steps being taken towards lessening the impact of the climate emergency. The profile that will come from the range of events will be incredibly helpful because it will allow us to get in front of a wide audience.

Q41 **Sally-Ann Hart:** Mr Edgar, do you have anything to add to that?

**Colin Edgar:** The short answer to your question is yes. The slightly longer answer is that people's perception of, say, the success of the Commonwealth Games is based on different rings of things the further you get from the city. I think that Glaswegians perceive the Commonwealth Games as having been very successful because, first, they were able to enjoy a fantastic sporting event but, secondly, they were able to enjoy in their city a range of fringe events outside the sport. That gave the city a real sense of being alive and animated. I think that perception was probably a little less strong in the rest of the UK but still there because the majority of people who attended the Commonwealth Games came from within the UK.

The perception of the success of the Commonwealth Games outside the UK and outside Scotland was primarily based on its success as a sporting event, and I think that this will be the same. The world's perception of the success of Glasgow, assuming nothing goes wrong, will be whether we get a meaningful and deliverable agreement. I think that the success for people in Glasgow will be based on that and a sense of pride in the city. If you, the legislators who are responsible for driving the Executive to get a result, are able to get a deal, they will be proud of that, but what they will really be proud of is whether their city was able to show its best face to the world when the world came to see us.

Q42 **Sally-Ann Hart:** Moving to planning uncertainty because of the pandemic, which is a bit worrying, there is a question here that can go both to the policing side and to the planning of the events around it and getting prepared. To the Assistant Chief Constable first, how are you dealing—or are you and, if so, how—with the uncertainty caused by the pandemic when planning the policing around COP26 and what is your current likely scenario?

**Bernard Higgins:** We are planning for an in-person event and the reason for that is quite simple. Should that not be the case, it is far easier to scale down a police operation than it is to scale it up at short notice. The working assumption, until the UK Government tell us otherwise, is that it is an in-person event.

The event will take place in November. The figure of 30,000 delegates was mentioned. If there is a reduction in the number of delegates, that does not necessarily equate to a pro rata reduction in the number of protesters who may choose to come. A lot of the policing planning is about facilitating and policing large-scale protests. The actual venue



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itself, the footprint around that, will take care of itself, but even if the Government say, "We are only going to have 20 Heads of State and 5,000 delegates" that does not necessarily mean that pro rata the likely protest groups will reduce.

The short answer, ma'am, is that we plan for a full in-person event and then scale down accordingly once more information becomes available throughout the year.

**Q43 Sally-Ann Hart:** That sounds sensible. Thank you. Mr Edgar, how are you dealing in Glasgow with the uncertainty caused by the pandemic when planning COP26? What is your current most likely scenario?

**Colin Edgar:** There are two things. Our most likely scenario is the Government's most likely scenario. Like everyone else, we are hoping that by then the roll-out of the vaccine programme and the lingering effects of the lockdown that we have had will mean that there is a much lower prevalence of Covid in the population at large. Our engagement with the planning about how to deal with Covid is through our input into the Cabinet Office's Covid stocktake, which they are doing at the minute.

Certainly, our view on this and the view we have presented to the Cabinet Office is that the rules that pertain in the city at the time should be the rules that would pertain in the city regardless and that the events that are happening in the city, outside the actual negotiation, should be treated in respect of Covid just as any other event would be treated at any other time.

We have seen that Covid restrictions can change very quickly and have changed very quickly. Of course, in Glasgow we are operating in an environment where there are two national Governments whose Covid rules have an impact on how people operate in the city, but both of those are currently moving on a timeframe of weeks and sometimes days rather than months.

What we are trying to do is work to say if you are having a COP in person, which I think is the COP that we will have, the Cabinet Office will deal with how that is dealt with inside the SEC. Outside the SEC, the rules that pertain at the time will be the rules that pertain at the time. Our environmental health and public health staff will play a role in advising what those rules might be but also in enforcing them and making sure that the events are held in a Covid-safe way based on the rules that pertain at the time. As I say, the fact that the rules tend to be put in place weeks and not months out means we have to be flexible and be prepared to be flexible.

**Q44 Sally-Ann Hart:** Looking at the possibility of COP26 being rescheduled, because we cannot rule that out if the pandemic rears its ugly head again, when would you expect that final decision to be taken?

**Colin Edgar:** I am afraid I couldn't say. That would be a matter for discussion probably between the Prime Minister and the UN. I know that



decisions about attendance and what the negotiations are at a COP happen quite late in the day. I would say—and you would expect me to say this, wouldn't you?—that Glasgow can cope with whatever the UN and the UK Government ask us to cope with. We will do what we can to make sure that it can happen in Glasgow in person at a time that the UN and the organisers want it to happen.

Q45 **Sally-Ann Hart:** Would you expect it to be rescheduled if necessary?

**Colin Edgar:** I really couldn't say. If there were any discussion about it not being possible to go ahead in November, the first thing we would do is phone the Cabinet Office and say, "Whenever you reschedule this to, we can do it". There was a lot of discussion, which I think was very unhelpful to Glasgow and to the UK Government, that it might be rescheduled in time and also in location, rescheduled away from Glasgow. I don't think that there was ever a discussion inside the Government about moving it from Glasgow and the speculation around it was pretty unhelpful.

I do not have an expectation that it will be rescheduled simply because I am not involved in those sorts of discussions, but if it were to be rescheduled, I would be on the phone to the Cabinet Office that day saying that we can still do this.

Q46 **Sally-Ann Hart:** I have one last question, about hotel accommodation. In the event of quarantine restrictions, they will be across Glasgow and in surrounding areas. Would there be a sufficient supply of hotels and accommodation in the event of quarantine restrictions?

**Colin Edgar:** As Leon said earlier, the accommodation for delegates has been managed by the Cabinet Office through its supplier. The delivery of quarantine hotels in Scotland is managed by the Scottish Government. For a two-week conference, it is hard to imagine people quarantining for two weeks if that was what was required of them, but I am afraid I don't know whether there is a sufficiency of supply because I do not know what the requirement for supply will be at the time.

**Chair:** We have a couple more questions. We have Wendy Chamberlain, Mhairi Black and then Douglas Ross to round things off. I know that we are getting to 1 o'clock, so if you feel that some of the questions have been answered already, do not always feel the need to re-emphasise points or come in. I know that we want to get you away as soon as we possibly can.

Q47 **Wendy Chamberlain:** As the Chair said, in 2005 he was an MP. In 2005, I was a police officer just returning from maternity leave as G8 got under way, but with a husband who was a silver commander in Edinburgh, so I certainly remember that well.

If I can come to you first, ACC Higgins, I have a couple of additional questions about policing. I know that colleagues have covered others well. I note the estimated £200 million for the cost of the policing operation in March 2020. In your most recent letter to the Justice Sub-



Committee you suggested that figure had decreased. Can you explain the reasons for that?

**Bernard Higgins:** The reasons for that, ma'am, were quite simple. At the inception of our planning we did not have any agreement with the UK Government for any planning assumptions. We planned the event to what you would describe as a low appetite for risk, which means low appetite equals lots of resources. After significant and prolonged discussions with the UK Government, we are now looking at having a moderate appetite for risk, so that is reflected not just in the budget but in our policing plans for how we facilitate protests. That then led to a recalibration of the number of resources we would need and then a recalculation of what that bill would come to. That is why it has reduced as it has.

Q48 **Wendy Chamberlain:** That is great. Thank you very much. I also note the report yesterday to the Chief Constable about the recent policing of Rangers fans celebrating and noted that John Scott QC agreed that the policing had been proportionate. I suppose there is no doubt there were comparisons made between the policing there and the policing of the Sarah Everard vigils in London. Thinking about proportionality, John Scott said that comms was incredibly important. Can you say a bit more about the comms, particularly around the first two categories of likely protesters or people wanting to legitimately make their point, that you are thinking about, ACC Higgins?

**Bernard Higgins:** It goes back to my comments about early engagement. We deploy protest liaison officers to go and speak to the organisations and individuals who would potentially come to COP26. The earlier you can do it and continually reinforce that message, you are more likely to get a positive outcome.

By way of very recent example, at the weekend I policed the Old Firm game, Celtic-Rangers. There were real concerns that again this would lead to mass gatherings of both sets of supporters at Celtic Park, Ibrox Stadium, George Square and elsewhere. Very early, I, the Scottish Government and the two clubs went out and spoke to key fan groups and key individuals to say, "Please stay at home". We reinforced that message all week and on Sunday we did not make one single arrest and we did not issue one single fixed penalty notice for any breach of Covid. There were no mass gatherings. To me that demonstrates that early engagement is likely to lead to a positive outcome and that is what we are doing right now with COP26.

Q49 **Wendy Chamberlain:** Thank you very much. That is great. My final question from a policing perspective is about how you will manage regular day-to-day policing operations during COP26. I note that ACC Hawkins is leading the work on that. He was my sergeant once upon a time, so tell him I said hi. Can you say a bit more about that? I note in your letter to the Justice Sub-Committee about the changes to resourcing and that you will have more people not on leave and, therefore, available. What other considerations are taken into account? How does



that look from a UK perspective? Are forces, which are providing 40% of the support, doing likewise? Is that joined up in its thinking?

**Bernard Higgins:** If I deal with Police Scotland first, you are quite correct that ACC Hawkins is the business-as-usual lead. John and I speak regularly. We also now have a local policing co-ordinating unit headed up by a chief superintendent, who is looking at exactly that to make sure that our resource levels across the country do not fall below what we would consider appropriate to meet our normal needs.

The reality is that on a Saturday night during COP26 there are still going to be calls that need to be answered. We know that there will still be football matches elsewhere in the country that need to be policed. It is a fine balance; I am not going to lie. We look to see what the minimum required for business as usual is, and whatever is surplus I take into COP. Whatever I need in COP that I cannot get from the surplus from Police Scotland leads to a mutual aid request. The role of NPoCC, the National Police Co-ordination Centre, is to look at my request and see how it can evenly distribute that across the whole of the English and Welsh forces and PSNI and only take a sufficiency of resource to meet COP26 demands, but also ensure that, wherever possible, business as usual can be delivered.

Clearly, there are variables. If the threat level to the country was raised to critical, for example, with terrorism, that would have a massive impact on how we deliver the event and the ability of not just Police Scotland but other forces across the United Kingdom to maintain business as usual. Our critical posture is quite different to what our posture is during times of either a substantial or a severe threat.

Q50 **Wendy Chamberlain:** As you have described, those processes have been in place as we have been delivering events of all sizes for some time. Thank you very much.

Moving on to something completely different, can I come to Mr Edgar? I believe that there is a host city volunteers programme, and I would be interested to hear a bit more about that. My mother was a 2014 Commonwealth Games volunteer and it was a very positive experience. First, what is happening on that and, secondly, is there a Covid impact?

**Colin Edgar:** Yes, I think that everyone who was a volunteer in 2014 found that a positive experience. One of the legacies of that for the city has been that we have a reservoir of people who want to volunteer at these sorts of events because most people derive real pleasure from doing it, but some people derive much more than that. It is an opportunity for people who are quite far from the job market to develop themselves

We are delivering the volunteer programme on behalf of the Cabinet Office. It has contracted us to do it for them simply because, as I say, we are becoming pretty good at this. The call for applications closes at the end of this week or middle of next week, so if you want to apply and you



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have not yet or your mum wants to apply and she has not yet, there is still a little bit of time.

If there is an impact from Covid, it is likely to be the same impact we have with a lot of things. I am thinking that right now we are in the middle of planning for the election. You need more space and you need more people. That might be one of the impacts, but certainly the requirement to alter the shape or the nature of the volunteer programme, if there is such a requirement, is one of the things that we would expect to fall out of the stocktake that is being done at the minute.

**Q51 Wendy Chamberlain:** How have the views of Glaswegians, Scots and, dare I say, people across the UK been taken on board about the programme that COP26 is looking at?

**Colin Edgar:** I mentioned earlier that we have our artists in residence programme. They are out in communities working with communities to reflect back how communities feel about this and what stories they want to tell. I also mentioned that we are working with the Stop Climate Chaos coalition. As a representative body for civic society, we want to hear what it is saying and what its experience is.

In devising our climate emergency action plan we took on board quite a lot from civic society groups, including Extinction Rebellion, for example. We have been quite good at listening to people about what they want to see and the job now is to reflect that and explain back to people how some of the changes that they might need to make in their day-to-day lives can be accommodated.

**Wendy Chamberlain:** That is great. I suppose having that kind of engagement there potentially helps ACC Higgins in his comms as well. Thank you very much.

**Q52 Mhairi Black:** Thank you to all our witnesses for giving us your time. It is really appreciated. I want to ask you a few things more from a health perspective in this. As you said, we are currently living in an unprecedented time and it is unpredictable where we will end up. Given that there seems to be a commitment to holding a physical event, can you tell us what preparations have been put in place for things like testing facilities, contingency plans for people who have to self-isolate while they are at the conference and suchlike? Can anyone give us a bit of detail on that side of things?

**Colin Edgar:** I can answer that question, albeit not give you a lot of detail, I am afraid. As I say, the Cabinet Office is undertaking its stocktake at the minute and one of the things that will fall out of that, I assume, is an updated list of planning assumptions. The kinds of things that you are talking about there I think will have to be a response to the planning assumptions that come out as a result of that.

We are working very closely at the minute with both Governments, the Scottish Ambulance Service and the British Army about spinning up



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testing centres and vaccination centres. We are getting pretty good at doing that and we can turn these things around on quite a large scale in a pretty small number of days and possibly even less.

To take testing as an example, I am confident that when they finish their stocktake, which we expect they will do in the coming weeks, and update their assumptions, the city will be able to respond to help to deliver what is required. If testing, for example, is required I think that we can get the stock of buildings and the staff in place, working with the ambulance service, the Army, Her Majesty's Government and the Scottish Government to make that sort of thing happen very quickly.

While I am not able to answer your question, I have a degree of confidence that we can turn around a response to the Covid stocktake in plenty of time.

**Q53 Mhairi Black:** That is really helpful. Thank you. Some of the evidence that we have heard from health professionals in particular has been concerns that if delegates are arriving and there is no guarantee that they have been vaccinated, we have a risk of creating a super-spreader event. Has there been any discussion as to whether people will have to be vaccinated? Then you are obviously touching on a vaccine passport sort of thing and that has a lot of consequences. Has there been any discussion on that?

**Colin Edgar:** There has been, but I am afraid I do not know what it has been in detail because, as I say, it is still in the area of that stocktake that is happening just now.

What I do know and what is really important here is that the conference has to take place or not take place. I don't think that anyone believes that there is a middle way to this. If you are a delegate to COP, you need to be treated the same as all the other delegates to COP. We will need to find a way, if we want to have it in person, of managing that. I know that that is a really live topic of discussion for the Cabinet Office now in its stocktake. As I say, we are probably a couple of weeks away from it coming out with the results of that.

**Q54 Mhairi Black:** Are the plans to have a fully physical event or is it going to be a mixture of hybrid events?

**Colin Edgar:** It depends what you mean by event. If it is the negotiation of an agreement, the intention is that that is. You can see why that would need to be the case because these things happen quite often in the room, don't they? You would want that to be the case.

It is as you spread out from the centre, from that core function, that you start to get into a conversation about what is going to happen in person and what is not going to happen in person. Again, mindful of what the Chair says about not repeating ourselves, I go back to what Bernie said, which is that if it is legal to come into the country from outside the country and there is a conference in person of any type, protesters will



travel. The city and the police are assuming that if there is any kind of in-person event there will be people on the street.

Q55 **Mhairi Black:** That is helpful, thank you. Do you have anything to add, Mr Thompson?

**Leon Thompson:** Not at that kind of level. From a tourism and hospitality point of view the industry has a good track record of reopening in a safe way. Industry is getting ready to reopen from 26 April right now. Industry representatives are speaking with the Scottish Government about guidance for businesses so that it is all Covid safe, Covid secure. We have worked with partners, including VisitBritain, to create a good-to-go scheme, which we used at the end of the last lockdown as well, just to give people reassurance that it was safe to go to bars, restaurants, accommodation and so on. From a tourism and hospitality point of view, certainly there will be a lot of effort going into ensuring that people are safe and that that is a clear message that is put out to people coming to Glasgow.

Q56 **Mhairi Black:** I have a final question to ACC Higgins. The way that you explained the different groups of individuals that you have to take into consideration was incredibly clear. I was glad when Wendy Chamberlain mentioned the events that we saw in George Square a couple of weeks ago. Again, from the health point of view, when I reflect on those events at George Square, we have all seen the challenges that can be faced or the hindrance that can be placed on the police in particular in dealing with groups that gather spontaneously and point blank refuse to social distance. Given that the police obviously are limited in how they can handle that, have there been any lessons learned from the events in George Square to prevent that kind of thing from happening again at an event such as this?

**Bernard Higgins:** I have to go on record and say that I thought the police response was exceptionally professional and proportionate, supported by the findings of John Scott QC. The reality is that we could not arrest our way out of that situation, so what we have to consider is what is the best outcome, given that it is a spontaneous event, as you quite rightly said, ma'am. For public health and public safety, the best outcome that the gold commander of the day decided upon was to try to control and contain it. That is exactly what he did, and then a controlled dispersal, which is a professional response as far as I am concerned.

The lessons that we learned from it were implemented as a reference for last weekend's Old Firm match, where we very firmly went out and said, "Please stay at home". We increased the number of officers who were on duty. I did a lot of media in the run-up to it and I was very clear with my messaging: the safest place for you is in the house; however, given the events of two Sundays ago, if you persist and ignore this, we will still engage with you, we will still encourage you to leave, but if you don't, be prepared for a robust engagement with our officers and the likelihood that you are opening yourself up to arrest.



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The George Square event was spontaneous. I think that the people who were responsible for that were the people who engaged in it and they were completely and utterly irresponsible, but I thought that the Police Scotland response was proportionate and professional.

**Mhairi Black:** Thanks very much. That is also the first time in my life I have been “ma’am”, so thank you for that.

**Chair:** It is all very “Line of Duty” in here today, but thank you for that. Lastly, Douglas Ross.

Q57 **Douglas Ross:** Thank you to our witnesses for an excellent session today. Could I start with Mr Thompson and Mr Edgar? Clearly, COP26 has been postponed by a year. When it was still being planned for last year, there was some conflict between the Scottish and UK Governments about venues being hired and suchlike. Has the year’s delay resolved a number of those conflicts? Do you feel there is better working between the UK and Scottish Governments now?

**Colin Edgar:** I think I have said several times that the short answer is yes. Our primary face-off is to the Cabinet Office because it is the event organiser. As I have said before, the relationship could not be better. The Scottish Government are not the organiser, but clearly they have some significant roles in transport, particularly the trunk network outside the city, and public health. I know that they are very engaged in those sorts of discussions.

We have not seen any kind of a disagreement about the use of space, and I know the event that you are referring to. The science centre is not a space that we control, but we do control some of the key iconic spaces in the city. We are experiencing, as you might have imagined, a lot of demand for those spaces and we are managing that behind the scenes. Everyone is being very well behaved.

Q58 **Douglas Ross:** Mr Thompson, have you noticed any difference, if we take the pandemic out of it, where you were at this stage in preparing for the delayed conference and now where you are preparing for hopefully the November this year conference?

**Leon Thompson:** From what I have seen, it looks like a very constructive relationship, with the Scottish Government in touch with the Cabinet Office and offering help and assistance wherever it is required. Earlier in the meeting I referred to the fact that VisitScotland has also put itself forward to have colleagues available in the blue zone and I understand that the Scottish Government are looking at people from within their own Departments to do likewise. From what I have seen, it looks like a very positive and constructive relationship.

Q59 **Douglas Ross:** Mr Edgar, back to you. You have explained, understandably, a lot of the outstanding work Glasgow City Council has done to prepare for this. Could you outline any of the engagement or discussions you have had with your neighbouring local authorities and,



indeed, all local authorities in Scotland? I know, coming from and representing a constituency up here in the north-east of Scotland, there is a lot of interest in COP26 being a success. If we look to the Northern Isles and the Western Isles, these are local authorities that have a lot of experience of working with companies, developing renewable sources of energy and so on. What has been the discussion through COSLA or through Glasgow City as the host council with other local authorities?

**Colin Edgar:** As you might imagine, our primary engagement with other local authorities is with the local authorities that make up the Glasgow conurbation because they will be impacted, not as strongly as Glasgow will be, but there certainly will be an impact on them. COSLA has very much taken the lead on how local authorities engage with this process. I believe it is actually considering this week what its next steps will be. Our engagement with the wider local authorities in Scotland has been through COSLA. We have had a degree of interaction, as I said earlier, with the other big cities in the UK through the Core Cities network, and the leader of the council is very active and becoming more active in the UK100 network of 100 ambitious local authorities, they call themselves, across the UK.

Q60 **Douglas Ross:** Moving to ACC Higgins, I wanted to follow on from the line of questioning by Wendy Chamberlain. I am not trying to catch anyone out here, but do you think that it is honest and up front to say that we are looking at business as usual during this pandemic for other parts of Scotland when 60% of the policing is going to come from within Police Scotland? It is a long COP26 period, 11 days, and there will be time before and after where there is an involvement with the police. Is it being honest to communities like Moray to say it will be absolutely business as usual or should we understand that there will be a limitation in what the police can do because of this major draw on the resources nationwide?

**Bernard Higgins:** I think that it is a fair question, Mr Ross. What we are trying to achieve is to minimise the impact as far as reasonably practical on business as usual. We have taken steps like we have cancelled annual leave for that period and officers will no doubt be working beyond their normal hours, but I cannot give an absolute guarantee that there will not be some impact on business as usual. What I and ACC Hawkins—who, as you know, is the ACC responsible for the north of Scotland so he has a vested interest for his own portfolios—look to see is whether there are any particular pinchpoints where I can make a decision to reduce the resource I need on a particular day to allow some resources to be redirected back into the business as usual.

The reality is that I cannot give you the guarantee you seek, but I can give you a guarantee that part of our strategic objective is to try to the best of our ability to minimise any impact it will have on business as usual. Things like 999 calls and assistance calls absolutely need to be prioritised and continue to be responded to as promptly as we currently do.



**Q61 Douglas Ross:** Could you give us a brief update on additional training that will be required for Police Scotland officers? Clearly, some will be doing very different roles at COP26 from their day-to-day roles. With the mutual aid from other forces, how does the training work for police officers from outwith Police Scotland?

**Bernard Higgins:** Police Scotland has taken on an ambitious uplift programme for the number of public order-trained officers that we want to get to. We are looking at hopefully increasing our establishment of public order-trained officers to about 2,500.

Beyond that, with the specialisms that we have in place now I do not have a particular need to train, for example, more negotiators or more firearms officers. What we have to do is to make sure that the current assets we have remain in cadre, they remain operationally and occupationally competent to continue to undertake the role that they currently do, whether a firearms officer, a mounted branch officer or a dog officer. We also have conventional officers who will be deployed, and again it is just maintaining things like their competency and officer safety techniques.

Beyond in the wider UK, yes is the answer, the same applies there. We have asked the UK forces to ensure that the specialists they have remain operationally and occupationally competent so that they can be deployed in COP26 in November.

Internally, we are also pulling together a training package. When mutual aid officers come to Scotland there will be a very detailed briefing on the difference in laws here compared with England and Wales so that they know that some powers that they may have available in England and Wales are not available in Scotland. We will also be briefing them very clearly on what the policing style and tone is in Scotland and that we expect them to police in that same style and tone. That is work that will continue. It has started and it will continue right the way through the coming months.

**Q62 Douglas Ross:** Thank you. Finally, can I ask about the capacity of your officers? I am married to a police sergeant here in Moray and I know that for the last year they have continued on the frontline. They have been doing outstanding work. We have the Euros and some of the games are being hosted at Hampden, which we hope will see spectators at these games. Then we have the biggest conference the UK has ever delivered in Glasgow. Are you worried about the capacity for your officers with less time off, dates where they cannot take annual leave when they would have expected it, and how are you addressing that?

**Bernard Higgins:** You have just highlighted what we recognise, that we have outstanding, dedicated professional officers and staff in Police Scotland and across the UK. How the police service of the United Kingdom has responded to the last year, not just with the Covid



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restrictions but with all the parades and demonstrations that have had to be policed, is absolutely incredible to watch.

There is a point I have to make as well before I answer your specific point, Mr Ross. What is sometimes forgotten is that, at the height of Covid, the police officers have still been going out and doing their duty. Whether it is in George Square or Moray, every day when people act irresponsibly on the Covid regulations, they are putting our officers at risk. Again, that is something for which I have to give plaudits to the men and women of Police Scotland and beyond, who pitch up and do their job daily.

On your question about the capacity, we are driven within Police Scotland by officer wellbeing. The Chief Constable has made this his pledge. Specific to COP26, we have a welfare and wellbeing strategy that looks at making sure that officers are well rested between shifts. We are not going to have officers working for six or seven days in a row. They will work potentially longer hours but shorter days and then have a good break in between. During the actual event, there will be substantial welfare arrangements for rest periods during their tour of duty, feeding arrangements and so on.

Again, we are very conscious that that is fine for all the officers who are deployed in Glasgow but it does not look at what happens to your wife as the sergeant in Moray and the fact that she now has to work a 12-hour shift because one of the other sergeants is down in Glasgow. That is a discussion that I am having with John Hawkins to make sure that the wellbeing and the welfare of the officers and staff who are not directly involved in Police Scotland is not forgotten about and is absolutely addressed. It is a commitment that the Chief Constable, Iain Livingstone, is particularly focused on and holds both myself and ACC Hawkins to account for very regularly.

**Douglas Ross:** Thank you, ACC Higgins.

**Chair:** I will echo from all the Committee that we recognise Police Scotland's dedication and professionalism over the course of the past year. We want to recognise and notice that, so thank you for that, ACC Higgins.

I thank all of you for attending. It has been a fascinating and interesting session. I think that we will go away a little bit more assured that all preparations are in place for a successful conference. It is an issue that we will continue to return to. We will hear from the UK and Scottish Governments about how we are going to progress this and all the issues that we are likely to confront. For today, thank you ever so much for your time. If there is anything further that we require from you, I know that you will be as helpful as possible to the Committee.