

# Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee

## Oral evidence: Net zero and UN climate summits, HC 144

Tuesday 27 April 2021

Ordered by the House of Commons to be published on 27 April 2021.

[Watch the meeting](#)

Members present: Darren Jones (Chair); Alan Brown; Ms Nusrat Ghani; Paul Howell; Charlotte Nichols; Mark Pawsey.

Questions 258 - 334

### Witnesses

I: Miranda Barker, Chair, Climate Challenge Group, British Chambers of Commerce; Emily Hickson, Member, We Mean Business Coalition; Stephanie Maier, Global Steering Committee, Climate Action 100+; Sam Peacock, Director of Corporate Affairs and Strategy, SSE.

II: Jamie Clarke, Executive Director, Climate Outreach; Michelle McGinty, Head of COP26 Team, Glasgow City Council; Jamie Peters, Interim Director of Campaigning Impact, Friends of the Earth; Anna Brown, Campaign Co-ordinator, Teach the Future; Josh Tregale, Campaign Co-ordinator, Teach the Future.

## Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Miranda Barker, Emily Hickson, Stephanie Maier and Sam Peacock.

Q258 **Chair:** Welcome to this morning's session of the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee for our hearing today on COP26. Today we will have two panels talking about how we engage business and the public as part of the COP26 conference being held in Glasgow later this year. For our first panel this morning, we are delighted to be joined by Emily Hickson, who is a coalition member at We Mean Business; Miranda Barker, who is chair of the Climate Challenge Group at the British Chambers of Commerce; Sam Peacock, who is the director of corporate affairs and strategy at SSE; and Stephanie Maier, who is on the global steering committee at Climate Action 100+. Welcome to all of you this morning.

I am going to start with a couple of opening questions before I call in colleagues. Emily from We Mean Business, given the role that your organisation plays, I wonder if you could set the scene for us and tell us what the role of businesses is at COP and how they help with the negotiation process.

**Emily Hickson:** I have been working with business for four years. I am with them at the COP, so I have a good view on this. Business is a formal constituency at the UNFCCC, which is the UN body that hosts the climate negotiations. Business is a constituency along with civil society, youth, gender and indigenous peoples, and we have long fought for that role to be part and parcel of the COP—to be observers but also inputters into the negotiations.

Business is a huge constituency. It does not necessarily speak with one homogenous voice, and that was certainly true in the early COPs, so 20 years ago, when we had some business representatives representing vested interests in high-emitting industries. There has been a tide change in the last seven years. We Mean Business, which I am a member of, was formed to create the progressive business movement at the COPs to really represent that business wanted climate ambition. We were there in Paris pushing for the net zero long-term goal and the 1.5 degree target.

We have really seen business now stand up as a progressive actor. We have supported negotiations inside the formal items of the UNFCCC. We have been supporting transparency in the Paris rulebook, and implementation periods of five years that are consistent between countries. All that will culminate at this year's COP.

We have also played a significant role in pushing for ambition, which sometimes is outside the COP. A good example of that was just over the last couple of weeks where we got 400 businesses based or operating in the US to write to President Biden asking for their nationally determined contribution, their national target, to be to halve emissions by 50% by 2030. That is the target we saw through. There were various US Administration actors, including John Kerry, who saw that the business role was imperative in building the confidence of Governments to do that.

We also work alongside our civil society partners to make that voice really heard. That is the role of business at the COPs.

Q259 **Chair:** Sam, SSE is one of the headline sponsors of COP26. What does business engagement at COP look like from your perspective?

**Sam Peacock:** Thank you for having us. It was a privilege to be asked by the Cabinet Office to be one of the sponsors there. It was not something that we expected. From our perspective, as a net-zero-aligned company, we want the whole thing to be a success. From the macro view, we want it to move on targets, et cetera. We hope that it also acts as a driver to move the policy environment on domestically. I could talk for hours about domestic energy policy; I will not, but the plate on renewables is spinning nicely and the plate on networks is beginning to spin. For some of those things like carbon capture and storage or pump storage, we need more progressive policy. We are hoping to be a bit of a cheerleader for UK domestic efforts, as well as hoping that the UK Government can help get a deal globally.

Q260 **Chair:** Stephanie, from a Climate Action 100+ group perspective, what is the level of interest in COP26? Are you seeing lots of people chomping at the bit to try to be involved, or do you have a bit of work to do?

**Stephanie Maier:** We represent one key business constituent, but particularly the investors. Climate Action 100+ is an initiative of over 570 investors, so that is asset owners and asset managers, collectively managing £54 trillion in assets under management. Our view as investors is concerned with the money we are investing on behalf of beneficiaries or our clients. We particularly have a view to see decarbonisation occur across the economy. We have a keen interest in how key businesses, key sectors and the economy as a whole are decarbonising.

Similar to the business trajectory, we have seen a very significant uptick in the last five or six years. In the run-up to the Paris Agreement, we saw a very clear voice from investors, articulating climate risk as an investment issue. This is not something that we can diversify our risk away from; it is something that is very much a systemic risk. That is essentially what drove us to set up the Climate Action 100+ coalition, which is a coalition of investors focusing on key companies to effect and support that transition. It is ultimately something that is important to us as investors as well as one constituent of the business world, as it were.

Q261 **Chair:** We will come back to some more questions on the role of private finance because we know that is crucial in getting our economy decarbonised. Miranda from the British Chambers of Commerce, how well are the Cabinet Office and the Government engaging with businesses across the country on this?

**Miranda Barker:** We need more in terms of selling to businesses why they need to be involved and how COP relates to them. At the moment, we are seeing a lot of communication and good marketing, explaining what COP is for the world and for net zero, but on progressing businesses' own internal actions and getting them to embrace COP and

understand that they should be linked into it and use it for the best possible purpose of galvanising the business community to move towards net zero, we need more in terms of sales as to why it relates to them. That is in terms of the threat from global warming but also from energy prices rising and the financial threat to business.

There also needs to be the carrot to lead them forward: if they take a proactive environmental stance and reduce their emissions, they are more likely to get good rates on emissions; they are more likely to get new customers and new suppliers and secure new deals. They are not yet linking COP26, as an abstract concept, to why their business needs to progress in that direction. It needs to be a much larger conversation with business motivations more centrally placed.

Q262 **Chair:** On that point, there is COP26, which is a negotiation about how we are going to decarbonise the world, and then there are our own decarbonisation plans. It sounds like the two problems are linked. Many businesses, unless they are in a relevant sector or they are one of the bigger businesses that take this as a policy responsibility, are just getting on, doing their day-to-day jobs and trying to survive and deal with Covid and everything else, and this is not yet seen as a high priority for them. Is that accurate?

**Miranda Barker:** That is about it. Their priority has been coping with Covid and Brexit. Their priority is the VAT return next week. It is not that net zero feels like something they should not be doing; it is just far distant in terms of priority. Until they feel that those changes in policy mechanisms, like energy prices, procurement standards and planning standards, come into play and start to accelerate the businesses in that direction for business reasons, it still feels very abstract and distant.

There are superb early-adopter examples who we can get speaking on platforms, and who are wonderful at communicating how it has been a real business benefit for them, but, by and large, the business community is not connecting its business finances and net zero proactivity with COP26 and that being the galvanising force that it could be.

Q263 **Ms Ghani:** I will direct my first question to Stephanie and ask Emily to follow up. The president, Alok Sharma, has pledged to deliver the most inclusive COP yet. Do businesses actually benefit from diverse voices, including civil society, being represented at the negotiations, or are they going to hinder what businesses can deliver?

**Stephanie Maier:** We very much welcome the inclusivity and the multiple voices being heard. Reaching the 1.5 degree target requires significant changes from business, investment and society. It is absolutely critical that we involve those multiple voices in that process and negotiation. We need to recognise that some significant changes need to happen. Hearing those voices being part of directing that policy and sending those clear signals is really important and certainly something that we would welcome.

**Emily Hickson:** I could not agree more. Keeping it inclusive is going to be a key consideration if this COP needs to be virtual. Business definitely benefits from having a diverse range of constituencies at the table. As I mentioned, we have long fought hard for that to happen. In particular, it is really important when business unites its voice through civil society to show that business wants these long-term policy signals, including net zero. There was a big campaign in this country with lots of businesses supporting civil society asks there.

There are also other constituencies like trade unions which are represented at the COP. Business needs to show how it is going to be willing to work with its workforce to decarbonise. The Government need to be part of that as well. It is incredibly important to have all of those. Climate change is everybody's responsibility, and we need everybody at the table.

Q264 **Ms Ghani:** You also mentioned what sort of COP could be taking place. There is some concern that it could be moved online or even postponed. Miranda, what is going to be feasible if COP is delayed? Have you heard an inkling that it may be postponed?

**Miranda Barker:** The conversation is certainly out there. We have heard people talking about whether it is going to be virtual or postponed. It is really important that we understand where we would get the most benefit from it, and why we should not delay a physical COP if we are possibly able to do that.

This can be split into a couple of different arguments. If you are thinking about stimulating business innovation and all those businesses that will bring their new environmental innovations to COP and that want to try to use this as a galvanising force to drive that forward, that is where we really need a physical COP. It is those conversations that happen offline and behind the scenes that help businesses move forward with that real technological stimulation and, effectively, getting their products out into the world. It would be such a pity; going virtual would lose all that.

As we have seen with President Biden's recent summit, there is the ability to get agreement in the room virtually and then for someone like President Erdoğan to step back the next day because there was no signatory or press coverage. You are not holding them to account in the same way.

If we had to go for a virtual COP this year, I would say, "Do not miss out on the opportunity to do something that significant as soon as possible, maybe next summer". If you had to delay the physical, delay it for a short time but do not use that as an excuse to delay action. I am not saying that it is an excuse for us, but you know what I mean. We might need to do both, but physical and soon would be best of all.

**Ms Ghani:** That is beautifully put. Whichever format COP takes, action needs to continue.

Q265 **Chair:** Sam, as one of the principal partners of COP26, are you part of

this conversation? Do you have any views on considerations around it being physical, virtual or postponed?

**Sam Peacock:** To be honest, I hope it can be physical for the reasons that Miranda put better than I could put, so I will not repeat them. We have to see how the world looks, how safe it is and what the advice is. We hope it is physical because there are quite a lot of offline benefits. You can probably engage society more. We want to get a united societal spirit behind this, and get some legacy out of it. That is definitely easier if it is physical.

Q266 **Charlotte Nichols:** Sam, as one of the principal partners of COP26, how are you using your position to engage your workforce? How are the businesses that you work with engaging their employees in the net zero transition and COP26?

**Sam Peacock:** We have quite an engaged workforce to start with, with what we are doing on renewables. We are building more offshore wind than anyone else in the world and things like that, so you get quite a positive climate base at the beginning. We are trying to really harness and capture it, and people are quite excited internally.

I will not bore you with all the different things we are doing but there are a couple of things that are interesting, and hopefully others listening can do this or better versions of this. We are trying to get an employee platform so that all our employees can make their own pledges, and the teams can have a bit of rivalry between them around their own carbon reduction. It is just a small thing going on in the background, but it just starts to get all our 10,000-plus employees competing with each other a bit on whether their team can reduce more personal carbon than others.

We are doing other things like an SSE academy internally, where we are getting a bunch of experts internally and externally. A green group leader has kindly volunteered—I will not disclose his name in case everyone else asks him to do it—to do a bit of a talk to us to try to start to engage our employees further.

We are really trying to capture this and, to be perfectly honest, as a company without a huge retail business or customer base, the employee side of this is really important for us. We are fully committed to doing it.

Q267 **Charlotte Nichols:** To follow on from that, one of the things that I did not hear you mention there is what you are doing in terms of engaging with the trade unions in your business as part of that programme. Is that something that you are doing currently?

**Sam Peacock:** I will have to update you on what exactly is going on with the trade unions. I suspect there are positive conversations around it, but I cannot say off the top of my head. If I could write back to you on that, that would probably be best.

Q268 **Charlotte Nichols:** That is very much appreciated, thank you. If I could go to Miranda next, similarly just in terms of the businesses that the BCC engage with, what work is taking place in terms of that employee

engagement?

**Miranda Barker:** The businesses that have really embraced this as an opportunity are seeing it as something where their employees and their whole customer base are coming with them. Those who have grasped it are finding it really positive. The example we had on a recent event was a company called Crystal Doors, which literally manufactures doors up in the north of England. It has really seen a huge emotional response from the staff being involved and getting the customers involved, and it has really improved its product profile and the whole business climate by using that opportunity very proactively.

Our difficulty, as always, is that you get that 80:20 rule. You get those businesses that are looking out and grasping all those opportunities, and you get those that still have their heads down and are trying to cope with difficulties. It is really our key in terms of trying to get more businesses adopting this and realising the positive things for their employees, their investors and their business as a whole by being proactive in this way.

**Charlotte Nichols:** That is really useful, thank you.

Q269 **Chair:** Emily, Charlotte made the point about trade union engagement. Of course, that is important because decarbonisation is going to mean, for many workers, loss of jobs, creation of new jobs, new skill requirements and changing patterns of work. From a We Mean Business perspective, do you have a track where you engage with trade unions on this, or is that entirely separate from what you are working on?

**Emily Hickson:** We absolutely do. We have a just transition programme. We see a just transition in two parts. The first part is about the transition of the workforce from high-emitting parts of the business to low-emitting parts of the business as decarbonisation happens. That needs to happen in dialogue with the workforce, so in social dialogue with trade unions. You can then come up with a plan with your trade unions to identify parts of the business that are going to change, where jobs are going to be lost, where redeployment or reskilling needs to happen, and come up with that plan together and enact it together, and bring in Government or local government where they need to play a role.

There also needs to be a focus on the new jobs that are being created in green sectors; that is the renewable sector, of course, but others too, such as the electric vehicle industry. That is where we are working with companies like Ørsted, Enel, and Iberdrola, which is Scottish Power, to look at how they can make sure that they are providing decent green jobs that live up to the jobs in the former fossil fuel sector. By and large, in Europe, lots of these jobs are being created.

There are some places where the TUC is probably less happy, but that is the standard that we are really looking for. Without a just transition, we do not know whether we will be able to make the pace of change needed.

Q270 **Mark Pawsey:** I want to go back to Miranda about where business is right now. In many ways, this is a very difficult time to be going to

businesses to start thinking about the long-term future and decarbonisation, when, as you reminded us, they have to deal with Covid and the survival of businesses through that, the challenges of Brexit and, on a day-to-day basis, getting next quarter's VAT return sorted. You spoke about the need for Government to sell the principles more effectively. How should Government do that? Should they have seminars? Should they have a team of people going out and talking to businesses about how they are doing that? You indicated a huge variation, in that some businesses are well on board and are using it as a method to market and promote their businesses, while there are others where you spoke about the need for a carrot and stick where, at the moment, the stick is a bit more necessary to get them to do things. If you were in Government, wanting to drive this agenda, what would you do?

**Miranda Barker:** I feel like I want to write you a huge sermon about this. This is my favourite topic. I am an environmental consultant by background. I have been trying to persuade businesses to progress in this direction for nigh on 25 years. You have to do it using the business motivation. Yes, you get the early adopters that do it with the climate motivation, but, if you want to take it into the whole business body, you have to use the business motivations.

Yes, it is the carrot and the stick. The last thing we want to say, as a chamber of commerce, is, "Apply carbon taxation" and all of these things without a way for businesses to move in a proactive direction and avoid the taxation by taking this decision themselves. We need to see advance notice of carbon taxation, changes to baseline procurement standards from the public sector and changes to planning requirements from the public sector, so that we can see that businesses need to move in that direction, and they understand that that pain and the increase in energy prices is going to come if they do not take proactive action.

We then need to give them the carrots and the opportunities to take positive action, with support and advice to look at reducing their energy consumption internally and encouraging them to purchase new technologies, and making those a positive environmental action in reducing their business costs and driving them forward. It needs to be that carrot and stick. It is about showing them the direction of travel that it is wise to go in, explaining why, and helping them do that, while showing them the stick to come.

Q271 **Mark Pawsey:** Who should be showing them? Whose responsibility is that? How can they do it effectively? Do we need TV ads or mail shots? How would you go about it?

**Miranda Barker:** It is an unusual answer, but the strongest way to do that is the baseline policy changes in Government. It is unusually one of those areas where I am not saying, "Give us loads of money to encourage businesses forward in subsidies". If you change the baseline structure by putting carbon taxation in in a forceful way to drive up non-environmentally sound energy generation, if you put procurement standards in place so that, if a business wants to supply into the public

sector, they have to have a certain level of energy-efficiency technology in place, if you change planning so that you cannot build new buildings, homes and residencies without adoption of local carbon technologies—

Q272 **Mark Pawsey:** Hold on. We want economic activity. What you are talking about is barriers to economic activity. How are we going to get growth post pandemic if you are going to burden business with a whole load of extra regulation?

**Miranda Barker:** If we put those pressures in place, it means that business has to look for the solutions. There are many solutions and lots of ways of putting those renewable generation and positive energy activities in place. You have to show a financial incentive to start that direction of travel, and then have the support in place.

The pledge to net zero that has been promoted on the UK Climate Hub is brilliant, but, at that same moment, businesses also need support and encouragement in how to put these things in place. We need the support structure in the same place as the pledging. We need the support structure in terms of messages from Government, in terms of, "This is what you do". There are many support organisations. You have them around the table here today. You also have the FSB and the CBI. All those support organisations are communicating this information. We need that communication to work in partnership with that pledging opportunity.

Businesses are then encouraged in terms of, "How do I sign up? What do I do?" The first thing they need to do is understand where their heaviest carbon use is: "Put your energy bills into here and receive advice and information on how to reduce your energy bill. Put in your petrol bill and receive advice and information on how to reduce your petrol bill". They will then see their financial carbon costs coming down and they will be encouraged to say, "What do I do next? I could look at adopting renewable technologies in my building. How do I do that?" "Here is a green finance model on how to do that".

It is about showing them, when they are motivated by your campaign and all of us around here, to come and sign up and pledge to do net zero activity and improve their carbon footprint. It is about that support, and what they can do to reduce their financial cost and increase the business benefit, but you also need the stick behind them to motivate them in that direction.

Q273 **Mark Pawsey:** Could I turn to Stephanie from the investors' point of view? Investors want to make a return. To follow Miranda's proposal of carrots and sticks, should we make it harder for investors to get a return on dirty, polluting businesses, and easier to make a good return on those that are green?

**Stephanie Maier:** One of the key things that we have seen—and last week was another example of this—is the importance of countries making net zero commitments as well. The UK has a leadership position here in terms of setting those targets. The sixth carbon budget was very

welcome. There is a real opportunity to set out a clear net zero policy framework to articulate how that is going to happen across multiple sectors.

Q274 **Mark Pawsey:** Is that absent from Government now?

**Stephanie Maier:** We have the clear carbon budget and the commitment in terms of the target. What we are keen to see is the detail. How does it come across in terms of the industrial strategy? What does it mean for individual sectors? It is essentially about that road map. Much as Miranda has outlined, businesses and investors need to see the direction that the policy is going in—again, this can be implicit pricing signals as well as explicit—to help drive that low carbon investment, the innovation and all the things that will support growth.

There is a lot of focus, rightly so, on the risks of not meeting decarbonisation, but it is also a huge opportunity. Providing that framework, which also supports that incentive to decarbonise, to accelerate and to develop that skillset and those technologies that are going to support not just the UK but the world in decarbonisation, is a real opportunity. The UK taking that opportunity to deliver at home, essentially as a blueprint across the board, can be hugely valuable.

Q275 **Mark Pawsey:** Are we too slow on that? Would you say that Government are not providing the right signals? Are they not sufficiently clear? Is their fiscal strategy not enough to drive the action that is necessary?

**Stephanie Maier:** We are now seeing good building momentum towards that direction. There is very good work from the Green Jobs Taskforce and the Treasury's Net Zero Review; they are really granular and important pieces of work. We need to see more of that granularity and detail to really help businesses understand what those opportunities are, but also what the risks are to not decarbonise. As investors, we are interested in that across sectors and the economy.

Q276 **Mark Pawsey:** Emily, what would you like to see Government doing right now to encourage business to proceed at a faster pace than it is currently?

**Emily Hickson:** As Stephanie was saying, it is about a short-term enabling policy. We are really pleased about the long-term targets—the 78% that was released last week—but there is a risk of policy incoherence. We need a whole-of-Government approach to policy now. We need to see that decisions like the Cumbrian coal mine—coal for industry but not for electricity—do not undermine the signal coming out of Government. The cut to overseas development aid is a poor signal to developing countries about how we are going to support their decarbonisation. We need to see a just transition plan for the North Sea. Continuing oil and gas licences on an undetermined basis does not get us to net zero. We need to see better policy on heating and cooling. A U-turn policy on residential and industrial heating is not good.

Business wants to see these shorter-term signals. It has been pleased by the signals around electric vehicles. We need to see more movement on the carbon price and, as Stephanie was saying, long-term sustainable investment planning. The UK Government can do that domestically. They can use COP this year, and they can also use their G7 hat this year to try to take action and send those signals to other countries too.

Q277 **Mark Pawsey:** Sam, how do you see the levers and messages coming from Government right now to encourage business to make the change?

**Sam Peacock:** I will give you a micro-specific example that is illustrative. We have really good targets in energy policy. We know exactly what we are aiming at. We need a net zero power target for the electricity system for 2040 or perhaps a bit earlier that should be consulted on and looked at. If you are looking at what goes into that, the renewable energy is getting there. We are getting there on offshore wind. We are moving that forward nicely, but more work is needed on some of the flexible technologies like CCUS, pump storage and battery technology. More policies are needed.

The Government are definitely going in the right direction—I am not sitting here criticising them at all—but, as with every process, more granularity is needed in those specific areas.

Q278 **Chair:** Miranda, you mentioned the UK's Race to Zero pledge that businesses can sign up to. I have heard anecdotally that it is a little difficult to talk to people, to sign up or to understand how to do that process. Is that accurate from your members' perspective? Do they know about this? Is it easy to get going?

**Miranda Barker:** It is probably still quite soon for them to really have their head around it. A lot of work is going on. A broad business base organisation is coming together and forming support mechanisms to help the businesses in what they do once they have pledged. The difficulty, when you look at that pledge site now, is that it is still just the pledge, and then what happens? My worry, as a business organisation, is that we get all the enthusiasm behind people looking on there and they go and sign up and say, "I am going to click that button and pledge", but then we do not capture them immediately in terms of, "What are you going to do? What is your commitment?" "I am going to look at my energy bill and try to reduce it by this much". Without just starting to give them support and ideas of what to do, they will sign up in the moment and then they will go away, and, as we have said, they will be facing a VAT bill that they have to do by next week.

We have to make sure, when we get people into that room and clicking on that button, metaphorically on that site on the internet, that they have activity and someone catching on to them, saying, "That is wonderful. Where are you based? Who can we link you to? Here are some supports available". That is the key. It is very easy to get people to dive on and do something short-term. You really need to help them then progress and

take positive steps that show them some benefits so that they keep going.

Q279 **Chair:** Emily, when you sign up to this initiative, you have to set a science-based target for how you are going to decarbonise. If businesses do not know how to do that, where do they go to sort that out?

**Emily Hickson:** Certainly, one of the options to join the Race to Zero is to join the science-based targets campaign. There is a simple process through the science-based target initiative. You go on their site, and you look at their methodologies. There are also partners that can help you with this. You then work to submit your unique target, which usually covers scopes 1, 2 and 3 for most businesses. There is a really robust target-setting methodology, which does not allow offsets to meet that target.

Adding to Miranda's answer, I agree. It may still be a little confusing, and that is a bit damning, considering we have been doing this for a year, but we are now seeing an uptake. Andrew Griffith, the net zero champion, has been very helpful in bringing lots of UK companies such as NatWest and Sainsbury's in the last couple of weeks. We are seeing that uptake happen.

As you said, we are not seeing enough progress on the action part. There are COP campaigns around transport and energy, which are trying to engage with business. There have been some steps forward in the energy-efficiency campaign. They have lots of companies looking at how they can manufacture and produce more energy-efficient appliances and lighting. There has been a bit of push there, but progress has been rocky. We have some recommendations about how they need to improve this, mainly focused on that sectoral push now. We want to continue the momentum around net zero but we also need to look at the sector areas. We want more focus on asking companies to set 100% renewable electricity targets, as well as on working on the initiatives that actually implement them. We want to see that happen. We want more organisation coming from the top. We ideally want these calls to action coming out of the mouths of Boris Johnson and Alok Sharma.

We also want the UK Government to think about their legacy. This only runs to November. What happens afterwards? Are we going to drop all this? We really want a clear plan coming out of the COP unit in terms of who is going to be in place on business engagement into next year and how they are going to work with the upcoming African presidency to maintain this momentum. The UK Government will need to really put emphasis on doing that.

Q280 **Chair:** We have mentioned the big businesses that have been able to sign up to this, and often the big businesses have dedicated members of staff to figure out how to do this and to engage with officials. If you are a small business running your day-to-day business, what do you do to sign up to this Race to Zero? Is it just a website pledge? Do you speak to someone? If so, who? How does it work?

**Emily Hickson:** As well as signing up to the science-based targets for big businesses, you can also sign up to the SME hub, which is a dedicated area for a small business to make that pledge. It has lots of resources about how you would go about doing that. There is provision for that too.

**Chair:** Okay, and then it is the follow-up point that Miranda made earlier. Thank you for that.

Q281 **Alan Brown:** Stephanie, I want to follow on from the comments about more companies signing up to net zero using the COP26 Race to Zero campaign. There have been reports suggesting that some of the businesses, in terms of their net zero commitments, are greenwashing in that their targets are not credible. Is it a problem if companies set targets to achieve net zero before they have actually considered the options to get to net zero? If so, how widespread is this problem?

**Stephanie Maier:** First, it is really important to make those long-term net zero commitments. It is a very important signalling mechanism. It is also important to demonstrate the corporate preparedness for that transition. Having said that, you cannot just wait until 2050 to see whether you have met it or not. Investors want to see how the company is credibly going to deliver along that decarbonisation path.

Last month, Climate Action 100+ released a net zero company benchmark. It is a very granular assessment of the 106 or so largest companies in key sectors that are responsible for the lion's share of emissions. We looked at four levels on the target side there, not just net zero by 2050. We recognised that it is very positive that we had over half the companies making those very long-term 2050 commitments, but it is also about what the long-term, medium-term and short-term targets are. We saw in our results that, as you move down to more near-term targets, the proportion of companies that had those in place decreased. It is something that we want to see. We are continuing to ask for it through our engagement, and it needs to be absolutely credible to ensure that these companies deliver on the long-term net zero 2050 commitment. That is certainly something we are asking for.

Aligned with that is looking at disclosure of capex. If companies are going to decarbonise, they need to be investing in different types of things to move their company, to be in a slightly different sector, to spend money on decarbonisation technology, and to invest in the parts of their businesses that they believe are going to grow. There are additional elements to disclosing what a credible net zero decarbonisation plan essentially looks like. So yes, these commitments are really important but they absolutely need to be backed up with very clear long-term, medium-term and short-term targets, with a clear business strategy on how they are going to deliver that.

**Sam Peacock:** From our experience, there is an interesting thing here. 2050 is quite a long time away, and management teams of companies and other things will have changed. The 2030, or closer, timetable on targets, which you can do through things like the science-based targets

initiative that we have done, is really helpful in driving that accountability over a timeframe that really matters. We want to be decarbonising now, not just doing loads of stuff in 2049. It is really important. Encouraging more companies to do science-based targets is the right way through this.

Q282 **Alan Brown:** How critical is the role of the Government? The Government have set the nationally determined contribution based on a much bigger reduction by 2030; you suddenly realise nine years is not a long time to make drastic cuts.

**Sam Peacock:** I have not touched on this much because it is maybe a bit easier for a bigger company to say this, to the Chair's point earlier, rather than some of the smaller companies that Miranda is also referencing. Businesses have to stand up to this. Businesses have to make these commitments. It is businesses that are going to be investing in these things. Business has a major role, particularly big business but also through those supply chains, in trying to drive stuff forward. We have been trying to work with our supply chains as part of our science-based target initiatives. We want our biggest suppliers—50% by revenue—to have science-based targets by 2024.

I would be lying if I said this was us pushing it on them. The supply chain is up for this as well. The conversations are very rich, and a lot of businesses are stepping up to it, but I appreciate it is harder for those smaller businesses. I cannot really speak for them.

Q283 **Alan Brown:** There has been a bit of criticism in terms of procurement through the CfD process for offshore wind, where a lot of jackets and different things are getting made halfway around the world and then getting shipped to the UK. Surely that has to be factored in as well.

**Sam Peacock:** We have been working very hard to get as big an indigenous supply chain as we can. It was great that the recent Dogger Bank contract allowed a big factory for blades to be built in Teesside. We need to do more of this. The CfD allocation, as I am sure the Committee knows from different things, is a price-based system, which means that you then have quite a lot of pressure on how you fulfil that supply chain.

We have been doing as much as we can. Sixty per cent. of our wind farms are generally sourced in the UK. The reality is that some bits of kit are not there yet, and that is where we have had some of these more difficult situations where we have not been able to do as much as we would want to. The Government have a big role here, working with industry to encourage more supply chain locations, so that we can build as much of the kit as we possibly can in this country.

Q284 **Alan Brown:** Emily, can you add what you see as the challenges and opportunities of setting targets in terms of the indirect supply chain emissions?

**Emily Hickson:** It is certainly a difficult challenge for a business to encourage all of its suppliers to do it, but, as Sam said, suppliers seem to

be up for it. In fact, that is one of the missed opportunities of encouraging UK businesses to be ambassadors for net zero. We should have been encouraging the ones that signed up to Race to Zero all of the time to push the campaign down the supply chain.

We can tell that it works. When you set a science-based target, companies decarbonise. We just had a report out recently that showed that, between 2015 and 2019, the companies that set science-based targets cumulatively reduced their emissions by 25%. That was 6.4% emissions per year of reductions. That is equivalent to 78 coal power plants annually. That is the amount of emissions. We know that setting a target drives action. That has to be the message down the supply chain. Companies are going to have to try to help. They are going to have to work with their peers, where they have joint suppliers, to encourage action, training or whatever it may be, and potentially set up supplier partnerships that allow small grants and investments in those most notable suppliers that have the most difficulty decarbonising. That is the role of big business.

It is also the role of big business in a just transition, which is exactly the point on the domestic supply chain. That is what we need to see happen while building new green industries. It is not just about the business building the asset; it is about investment in the community too.

**Miranda Barker:** Supply chain pressure is one of the most positive ways we can encourage businesses—much smaller businesses—to go down the route of decarbonisation. For instance, in our local area, we have 500 SMEs that supply into British Aerospace. If British Aerospace were to say to them, “We want to encourage and support you to do this, bring you together on our premises and help you learn how to do this”, so that the support is there as well, that would really motivate those small businesses to do that. They would do anything to keep their links with those big customers strong. If the right supporters then plugged in through those large companies, that would really help them.

A lot of it with SMEs is not the spending piece; it is the first bit of what they can do without any cost, just in terms of behavioural change to reduce energy consumption, and then start to learn how to put in low-cost measures to improve their performance. It is a really positive encouragement to an SME if the big suppliers—their big customers—are saying, “Come with us on this. We want our whole supply chain to progress”.

Q285 **Alan Brown:** Is there enough of that going on in terms of companies that are making net zero pledges?

**Miranda Barker:** I do not think so. It is not visible enough. It would be really good. It is perhaps something we can work on with the key sponsors for COP26 in terms of getting them to start that work. I know you are doing that, Sam, but maybe we can make it a much more externally visible thing, so that you are challenging others to do that who then follow you.

**Chair:** It is great to see some progress and agreement there among the witnesses. That is very good.

Q286 **Charlotte Nichols:** Stephanie, how are the risks of climate change affecting the cost and accessibility of finance for businesses today? How is it expected to change over the coming decades? I am particularly interested in hearing your thoughts on the impact that the Task Force on Climate-Related Financial Disclosures' "comply or explain" reporting has had on business interest in climate commitments since it was introduced earlier this year, and how it has affected investor attitudes towards low or high-carbon investments.

**Stephanie Maier:** It is incredibly important to have TCFD-aligned disclosure, and to have a disclosure regime that requires both businesses and investors to disclose decision-useful information. This is really to your question about how it impacts investment decisions and, for other financial institutions, how it might impact lending decisions as well. That disclosure is very much welcomed. It is one of the asks to the companies in the Climate Action 100+ initiative. This is again focused on the largest global emitters, but it is one of the areas where we have had most success, in the sense that 80% of companies that have committed to it are already producing a TCFD-aligned report.

However, within the TCFD framework, there is quite a lot of granularity. It is fair to say that there is still a lot of scope for improvement around the disclosures in some of the more specific areas such as the scenario analysis, in terms of what it means for a business under different transition scenarios—1.5 degrees or two degrees. That disclosure is important to reinforce the investment decisions that are being made. Ultimately, we are looking at making good risk-adjusted decisions, balancing risk and return, and therefore having that granular decision-useful information that discloses the risks as well as the opportunities. As I said earlier, the company's plan and strategy for operating, supporting and winning in a decarbonised economy is really important.

Q287 **Charlotte Nichols:** As a follow-up, I wanted to ask Miranda about what support SMEs need to manage their climate risks.

**Miranda Barker:** They primarily need information. They need the information about how to improve their energy efficiency and reduce their energy use. They need information on how to divert away from certain bad sources of supply of various products, et cetera. It is really helpful if they have the information, but it is also that sales piece, as I have been saying. It is about the supply chain saying, "We want you to progress in this direction". It is about investors saying, "If you want to come to us for funding, you are going to need to be in this place". It is about that encouragement as to why they need to move forward, and then easy advice on how to reduce their environmentally damaging measures internally in their business.

It is about support, advice and a little bit of encouragement from the rising energy prices and things behind them. It is about the motivation that moves proactive environmental action up their to-do list, so that it

goes beyond the things that are pressing every day and becomes something that is really important from a business point of view. It is about the advice, guidance and support, but also the encouragement from the customers and the legislation behind them.

**Q288 Chair:** Stephanie, we are looking at decarbonising heat in another inquiry. There is a lot of discussion about the need to bring in private finance to make that happen because it is quite expensive. It may need new business models, extending CfDs, capacity market auctions or whatever it might be. Do you think that the Net Zero Review coming out from the Treasury in the autumn before COP26 is going to be the place where all these big policy directions are announced from a private finance perspective, or will it be a slightly longer-running process to get all this sorted out?

**Stephanie Maier:** To pick up on some of the themes from earlier, it is really important that we look at a coherent, across-the-board policy response. That incorporates the Treasury as well, which has made huge strides. The UK green finance strategy and the disclosure regime are part of that. How do we green the financial markets and how do we support the financial markets in the decarbonisation of the economy? We would certainly hope to see some of the more granular policy measures, as mentioned earlier, at that sector level. That is really where we see those sector pathways and sector policy frameworks.

From a Treasury perspective, it is about thinking through what levers are available to encourage further investment in those areas. Policy is one of those really important levers. If we, as investors, can see the direction it is going in, we can see those companies that are going to benefit from that transition. That will pool in capital. That transparency piece, as well as policy coherence and clarity at the sector level, is really critical to leveraging and crowding in the private finance as well.

**Chair:** We will probably want to look at that in a bit more detail later in the year.

**Q289 Paul Howell:** I would like to move the discussion on to talk about offsetting or avoiding emissions. Miranda, you made the point earlier about the relative priorities that businesses find themselves with; they are dealing with Covid, VAT returns, et cetera. In terms of offsetting or avoiding, is it seen as an easier way? Is it an appropriate way? Is it a step in the right direction? Could you give me some sense around what your views are? Then I will come to Emily and Stephanie to follow up the discussion.

**Miranda Barker:** With my environmental consultant hat on, offsetting has to be the last resort. First, you need to work with the businesses to reduce their energy consumption. Speaking to the distribution network operators, they need us to reduce our existing consumption first to whatever level is feasible. Then we need to look at opportunities for renewable generation onsite. Offsetting definitely needs to be as far down the road as possible, because it does not solve the problem in the long term. Before offsetting, we are encouraging business to look at what is

sometimes called “insetting”, where they are looking within their own supply chains; if it is not within their own businesses, they can then try to work within the supply chain and close at hand to reduce emissions that they can see locally and relate to. Offsetting should definitely be further down the road. We must make sure that, where companies are using offsetting as their way of potentially avoiding reducing their own energy consumption, it is regulated and properly evidenced. There are a lot of schemes out there that are not as reputable as we would like them to be.

Q290 **Paul Howell:** I get that in terms of the reputation. That was another point that I was going to come back to. I absolutely have that question in my head. What should we do to make it more explicit that it is substantially more important to be reducing than offsetting? Do you think that message is out there strongly enough? I am particularly talking to you about the SME community, and then I will go to the others.

**Miranda Barker:** It bears saying again and again: if we look at the energy supply we have now, we already have examples locally where businesses are looking to expand their operations, and there is not significant energy supply now, so we are already restricted in terms of supply. We talk to businesses about what is going to happen next in terms of consumption of electricity. If we are moving to far more dependence on electricity for heating, whether domestic or industrial, and if we are looking at electric vehicles, you can see that the supply needed is going like this. Offsetting does not solve that problem. Offsetting just gives us a different carbon-oxygen balance somewhere else. We need to reduce the existing consumption now so that we can cope with future development and reduce the CO2 emissions from energy production. Offsetting is not something that I would encourage our local businesses to consider until they have done everything else that they can possibly do. That is a long way down the line for most businesses.

Q291 **Paul Howell:** Is there any sort of agenda that should be more explicit? If a company is saying that it is achieving its carbon objectives but it is doing it by offsetting as opposed to by reduction, should that be more explicit in the reporting that is coming out? It is almost like you are naming and shaming those that are doing nothing, naming and shaming those that are not doing it in the best or more realistic way, and then giving really big gold stars to those that are doing the right thing. Is there something in that space that we should be doing?

**Miranda Barker:** That is a good idea. We do not want to just see a single figure at the end where they have wrapped in whatever they have done with their own internal energy consumption, and then they are offsetting figures and have just done a final figure of, “Look, we have reduced our net consumption”. We need to see, “What have you done for your own internal operations? How have you reduced your own consumption? What have you done to diversify into renewable generation onsite? What proportion are you saying is coming from offsetting, and why is that where it is coming from?” Yes, let us question it more.

Q292 **Paul Howell:** Emily, would you like to build on that?

**Emily Hickson:** It is a really good question because, at the moment, it is not the case that all net zero pledges have necessarily been created equally. You have to look one layer down to understand the scope of the emissions they include and what they are going to do. Race to Zero has tried to correct for that in some cases because its main campaign is the science-based target initiative that I mentioned earlier, where 1,300 companies are committed to set science-based targets. That does not allow offsetting to be part of the progress that you are reporting against as you implement those targets. They are in a big conversation right now about creating a net zero protocol, which will really be the gold standard for net zero target-setting. That guidance should come out very shortly.

In short, as Miranda was saying, offsetting does not replace the need to reduce value chain emissions in line with science. There may be a role for companies that want to invest in high-quality offset projects along their journey, but, as I say, it does not replace the mitigation inside their company. We need money to flow into some of these projects such as restoring trees, reforestation, carbon sinks and low-carbon technologies, but not at the price of not reducing your emissions.

Q293 **Paul Howell:** Would you like to comment on avoided emissions?

**Emily Hickson:** Avoided emissions cannot be counted as part of delivering on your carbon footprint. We need companies to be the low-carbon product providers of tomorrow. We want those companies to exist, so we encourage them to sell products that help other companies avoid emissions, but you cannot count that as part of reducing your carbon footprint.

Q294 **Paul Howell:** Stephanie, could you comment from an investor perspective?

**Stephanie Maier:** It is worth reflecting on the two parts. One is what the role of offsetting may be in net zero targets, which Miranda and Emily have been very eloquent around. There are very clear risks around carbon offsets. Much as targets are not created equally, offsets are not created equally. There are certainly risks around quality, additionality and permanence. All these things are really critical to address.

Q295 **Paul Howell:** To pick up on that specific point there, is the investor community getting enough information to make decisions on those different types of offsetting?

**Stephanie Maier:** This is where I would recommend a clearer standard around the accounting for, and the disclosure around, the use of carbon offsets. As we have heard, we need to be very clear about the role that offsetting may play in an overall net zero commitment. Where offsets are used, we need to make sure that they are high-quality, verified offsets. How do we shift from that avoided piece, where you have all those issues of additionality, et cetera, to carbon removal offsetting? Again, it is a small area but it is something that needs to happen long-term. There is also the shift to long-lived storage. There are principles out there for net-zero-aligned carbon offsetting, but we really need to develop a very clear

understanding of how they are accounted for and the quality of those offsets. To echo the points made, we are not going to decarbonise our economy just by offsetting. It is very much the last piece of that puzzle, and a lot of work needs to be done around that to make sure that is credible and delivering.

It is definitely worth articulating where we consider the role of offsets to be, and that to be a minor role, but also, where they are taking place, that they are absolutely of high quality moving towards the removal element, and are clearly accounted for, so that we understand what proportion is reduced emissions and what proportion is the offsets right at the end of that process. There is that hierarchy, as Miranda outlined.

Q296 **Paul Howell:** My interpretation is that, if everybody offsets, nobody does anything. That is one extreme. It is therefore a very dangerous message to see offsetting as being a reasonable thing to do. I absolutely endorse what you are saying in terms of it being well down the channel of decision making. We have agreement as well that it must be very explicit, or as explicit as possible, in the reporting of what a company is saying it is doing as to how much is offset as opposed to how much is real. You have endorsed the clarity that I was looking for.

Sam, is there anything you would like to add to that? We have gone round through the different stages. I would be interested in your perspective.

**Sam Peacock:** The three witnesses all have a better view than I have on this. It feels like something that was very valuable a few years ago, but the world has moved on a bit. We need harder targets all round, but there will be a few specific pieces where it is still helpful, as Emily in particular alluded to.

Q297 **Chair:** Before we wrap up, this is your last chance to put on the record what you would like to see if there are changes to the way COP is hosted in November. This is my personal view. I know that the president of COP is keen to have a physical COP for national delegations, but that may mean that there are restrictions on people outside of the national delegations physically taking part in Glasgow. If that is the case, what would you like to see put on for business to ensure that your voices are heard effectively at COP?

**Miranda Barker:** There are two things. The first is there are a lot of businesses with really excellent low-carbon technologies wanting to exhibit those at COP. It is a huge potential sector for the UK, and we need to make sure that we somehow allow them to have that physical ability to display the technologies. I know we can do it virtually, but it is much easier to do it physically and have people seeing, touching and things like that.

The other thing is the piece that I started with. We need to make COP, whether it is virtual or physical, much more relevant to small businesses. They need to understand that sales process of why it is important to them in a business sense to move in this direction, and why it is

business-beneficial. We need to use COP as the galvanising tool to make that much more visible than it is now.

**Emily Hickson:** To echo Miranda, there needs to be a real point of business dialogue with Governments, that are enabled by the UK Government, during the negotiations. There needs to be real inclusion there, getting their voice heard.

That is also true for all of civil society. When you go to COPs, you see campaigners and youth campaigners in the corridors banging drums. We must not allow the online version of COP to drown out those voices. There will be a lot of Zoom calls like this. We as business, but also the UK Government, must provide spaces for those voices to be heard.

**Sam Peacock:** I have two comments. There are a lot of businesses standing ready to invest in the green solution. Do not forget this domestic effort part. If we were ever in a room with Boris Johnson, we would say, "Do not forget this domestic effort part. Please have ambitious targets, but please have the policies underneath them. Companies like mine will invest in them".

We should also not forget this opportunity to engage. We talked about engaging businesses. You have a session later on the wider society, but this is a huge opportunity to have a legacy of momentum and effort that goes on after November. To be honest, that is as interesting to me and my company as the negotiations themselves in November.

**Stephanie Maier:** If there is a portion of this that is online, let us use it to increase participation and have more conversations across stakeholders, and use them for focused and efficient talks. There is huge value in having COP physically. It is about how you account for those side meetings and sessions. How do we really think through using that medium to support inclusion and participation?

This is a moment in time. What are we going to do in the next weeks, months and years to continue on this and drive forward this agenda? There are huge opportunities here but ones that absolutely need a clear policy and plan behind them. Let us start planning now for post November as well.

**Chair:** That is the end of our first panel. Thank you to Emily Hickson from We Mean Business, Miranda Barker from the British Chambers of Commerce, Sam Peacock from SSE and Stephanie Maier from Climate Action 100+.

## Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Jamie Clarke, Michelle McGinty, Jamie Peters, Anna Brown and Josh Tregale.

Q298 **Chair:** We are now moving on to our second panel for today about the

role of the public and civil society at COP26. I am delighted to welcome Anna Brown and Josh Tregale, who are campaign co-ordinators at the youth organisation Teach the Future; Jamie Clarke, who is the executive director at Climate Outreach; Jamie Peters, who is the interim director of campaigning impact at Friends of the Earth; and Michelle McGinty, who is the head of the COP26 team at Glasgow City Council. Welcome to all of you this morning.

I have the first question to get us going before I bring in colleagues. The Government have said that they want COP26 to be the most inclusive COP ever. I would just be keen to hear from each of you what that means to you. What would an inclusive COP look like from your perspective?

**Jamie Peters:** Good morning, everyone. Going for the most inclusive COP ever is quite a claim. The COPs previously have always struggled in terms of inclusion and participation, so it is good just to have that context that this is always something that the chair or the host nation aims for. It has always been a challenge, and this year is probably going to be the biggest challenge.

My point of view, from my experience of working at the COPs and with the UNFCCC, is that the host is going to have to work very well with the UN Secretariat on participation issues in terms of representation. If we are having dialogues with civil society or meetings with the host Government, who is being included in those meetings? There are nine different civil society constituencies at the UNFCCC. We have youth, indigenous groups, women and gender and so on. How are they going to feed into this? Of course, we have our colleagues in today from the business constituency.

We are going to have a big emphasis on whose voices are heard there. Previously at the COP, there has been a bit of negative publicity where big polluter influence has been seen. The host nation has been criticised quite a lot for that. If that voice is evident but the ones I have mentioned are not, that will be a bit of a tightrope for the Government.

In terms of inclusion, this is not just the two weeks of the COP. What are we doing beforehand? How are we listening to those voices? How is civil society getting on board? After those two weeks, what are we doing to make sure we continue those discussions? An inclusive COP would include working with the Secretariat to pick up on good practice of the past and making sure that there is space outside of the COP for civil society groups and a people's summit, which I know has been popular in the past. Being very proactive in that in the next few months would get massive plus points. I know the Government and the Cabinet have made efforts to include groups so far, so we welcome that.

We are looking beyond the COP at how we will continue those discussions that we start. I am sure we will get into the impacts of this being an exceptional year and the COP potentially being done virtually.

Q299 **Chair:** Jamie, just to push you on one point, you were making an important point there by saying that NGOs and civil society groups help

amplify the voices of other constituencies. Is that correct?

**Jamie Peters:** Yes, that is right. At Friends of the Earth, we work in an international network. Many of our colleagues across the world have been going to the COPs in the past and bringing those voices in.

This is just a quick note on the purpose of civil society. It is to amplify those voices, but it is also to act as a link between the talks. They can be a bit opaque and very technical for the general public, in the country and around the world. It brings a bit more of a human face to it, but we are also not talking about protest groups in civil society. We are talking about lawyers and experts in the field that really support national delegations. I cannot stress enough that their inclusion here is not a token one. It is something that really builds on the success of the talks.

In the past, had we not had strong participation from civil society, we would not have got the texts, imperfect as they are. We would not have even got those. We definitely see it as our role, as Friends of the Earth but also as part of the NGOs, to amplify that and work with the Government. We want to make this participative and be positive in our approach. Yes, you are spot on.

Q300 **Chair:** I am going to come to you next, Anna and Josh from Teach the Future. Anna, what would the most inclusive COP look like for you? How would young people engage in that?

**Anna Brown:** One of the key things is to look at how young people have to engage differently. Even if you look at the scheduling of COP, a lot of the actions will be during school days, when students cannot attend. It is a matter of making sure that schools can be engaged in that process and it is translated into action that means the general public can attend.

As Jamie said, it is also a matter of making sure that the marginalised voices are heard, such as those from the global south. Part of our job at Teach the Future and Fridays for Future is helping to amplify these voices. We are looking at other ways to do that such as providing translations. These would not just be in different languages, but also in sign languages around the world to make sure we are not blocking off communities.

We are also looking at how vaccine inequality will especially influence this COP and ensure that we do not look at it in terms of the UK being in a position to host COP. We need to make sure that those communities most affected by climate change are in a place to fully participate in COP.

Q301 **Chair:** Josh, Anna has made the point that you guys might be in your classroom or lecture theatre during the day. There will hopefully be some online activity during that time. Presumably you would like some physical space for youth voices as well when you are able to attend.

**Josh Tregale:** Yes. It would be really great, as well, to make sure that there is space for civil society to take part. Jamie has mentioned that civil society forms quite a large part of amplifying voices that are sometimes sidelined at some of these conferences and really amplifying the needs of

countries that might not have the same resources as countries like the UK. It is really important to think that sometimes, if something works for the UK, it might not work for the rest of the world and everybody that we are trying to reach.

There are other aspects; it is not only when things fall during the school day, but religious festivals and ceremonies and culturally significant events that might occur during the window that COP is happening in, like Diwali, other festivals and religious and cultural events like that. It is really important to be aware of those sorts of things to make sure that people can fully engage and do not feel torn between two different things at the same time. I would echo what Anna and Jamie were saying about making sure that there was a space for civil society and youth. One of those roles is about amplifying the voice of the global south and marginalised communities.

Q302 **Chair:** Jamie Clarke, do you want to add anything further to the previous submissions about what the most inclusive COP ever might look like from your perspective?

**Jamie Clarke:** In addition to what has already been said, which I agree with all of, previous COPs have often gone down the road of having a fig leaf of engagement. This needs to be genuine and comprehensive engagement. When it works, it provides accountability to communities around the world and in our country, but it also provides the energy to drive forward the negotiations. We have seen it time and again. When those outside the policy bubble are hearing and feeling the pressure, they can go through the night and make those decisions that are really hard to make for leaders. There is a lot there.

That translation out of the COP is a really important element on inclusivity as well. We need to admire the aspiration, but then also translate it. What does that mean for communities that cannot be at COP? How does that representation of COP translate into everyday life in the UK for different communities? It is really crucial to bring in marginalised voices from around the world, but also those who have largely been marginalised from the climate change conversation, for whom the low-carbon transformations may impact on their jobs and their transport, and allow them to be the recipients of understanding and put that pressure on.

There are two elements here in terms of inclusivity. One is about people speaking into the COP, but also the COP speaking to the wider public's understanding of climate change and where it fits with the wider agenda. There has been talk about the analogy with the Olympics. This could be the UK's "green Olympics" moment. If we harness it well, it could build public support, which is already at a high-tide level. If we do not do it well, we could see that tide receding. That would have negative implications for the next decade when we really need to make hard decisions.

Q303 **Chair:** Michelle, there is no pressure. You want London 2012 in Glasgow

2021. Is it all going to plan?

**Michelle McGinty:** Absolutely. Staging and hosting COP in Glasgow is a brilliant start to achieving the most inclusive COP ever. For those of you who know Glasgow, we are a city that embraces protest and activism. We are very lucky to have an extremely vibrant civil society, cultural sector, young people and faith groups. Everything that we do operationally—we are working with Government, our police colleagues and so on—is with that in mind. We are making sure that we create an inclusive and embracing COP city where people feel they can come, have their voices heard, and be respected and welcomed. Glasgow is the perfect backdrop for that.

Just building on what Jamie said, we are really keen to make sure that we contribute to the successful outcomes of COP by providing that constructive pressure and COP city feel to inspire the delegates to push on and do what they need to do.

**Chair:** Thank you, Michelle. We will ask some further questions later about what that might physically look like in Glasgow.

Q304 **Ms Ghani:** My first question is for Michelle. There is some speculation that COP may be delayed or become a virtual event. Michelle, which one would you prefer?

**Michelle McGinty:** Without a doubt, an in-person COP is what Glasgow is committed to and working very hard to achieve. There is no doubt that that is our preference. We have been working as a key partner with the COP unit to contribute to the Covid stocktake and work on the various mitigations that might be required due to Covid. Supporting the delivery of a safe and successful COP is at the core of what we are doing. We believe we have the expertise to support the UN and the Government to do that. We are as committed to the climate outcomes as any of the partners, and we know that an in-person COP is the way to achieve that.

Q305 **Ms Ghani:** Even if it is delayed, do you prefer an in-person COP to a virtual one?

**Michelle McGinty:** We are ready to host COP whenever the UN and Government decide that it is best to do so.

Q306 **Ms Ghani:** Michelle, if it is delayed beyond anyone's control, what should the president do to keep all the work that you have done and all the other actors have had in place to ensure that we do not lose momentum, especially from civil society groups?

**Michelle McGinty:** One of the interesting things that we have seen is that, when the first postponement happened in the summer, we in Glasgow, and certainly amongst our stakeholders and partners internationally, did not see any let-up in momentum. There was both pressure inwards and outwards. We are pretty confident; yes, we absolutely have to keep engaging, keep the momentum up and work hard on that, but we have seen no sign, over the time when it was

uncertain when it would be, of any drop-off in engagement, legacy planning or indeed delivery of legacy before COP.

Q307 **Ms Ghani:** Jamie, you spoke about hard-to-reach groups. If COP were a virtual event, can you name the top two or three groups that you think would be excluded and what work would need to be done to bring them through that experience?

**Jamie Clarke:** The reality is that groups that are already engaged are most likely to be there, whether it is physical or online. The barriers would be to those groups that do not recognise themselves as environmentalists or fit with the values that are often seen as associated with environmentalists.

Domestically, after 15 years of working on engaging wider audiences, there are groups that feel socially and economically excluded from the wider conversations about the country's progress in general areas, but particularly in this. There have been lots of conversations about red wall constituencies, but I am thinking about lots of post-industrial areas. It will be vital that they are engaged and on board with the next 10 years of work around climate change because it will be transformational and hopefully a real opportunity. They are unlikely to be there in either form. You also have those who have traditionally not associated closely with this politically.

Working with those groups either way would be important. If it moves online, we have seen that younger people are more adept at working online and with the resources. Those marginalised groups I have described and older people less familiar with the technology will probably find it harder to engage.

Q308 **Mark Pawsey:** I just want to ask some questions about how the public engages and the level of interest of public engagement. This Committee has been involved in the citizens' assembly. We know that, when people think about the issues, they will get engaged, but there is a whole host of people who we might describe as the silent majority. We took evidence from businesses in the last session, as you heard. Dealing with Covid and Brexit and getting next quarter's VAT return is sometimes more important to businesses on a day-to-day basis.

If I could ask each of you in turn, what is your assessment of the level of public interest in the broader issues that are being discussed at COP and the event itself? Michelle, perhaps your job is to attract people to Glasgow. How are people in Glasgow thinking about this? They will be much more engaged, I am sure, than the country as a whole because it is on their doorstep.

**Michelle McGinty:** There is no doubt that it being here definitely means there are increased levels of engagement. It is fair to say that engagement is incredibly high.

One of the biggest examples that we can show of that is the response to our volunteering programme. We are running the volunteering

programme for COP. In the search for 1,000 volunteers, we had 10,000 applications, which is amazing. It really shows the pent-up enthusiasm, momentum, and engagement that is there. Some of the applications have been really inspirational.

That is probably one of the clearest pieces of evidence that we have. Those applications have come from all over the UK and the world. Twenty per cent. of the applications have come from people who have volunteered before. There has been a very strong level of applications from young people. Just as one example of something tangible that is happening in Glasgow but is reaching out to the wider world, I would say it is incredibly strong.

**Q309 Mark Pawsey:** Jamie Clarke, you said that groups already engaged will be there. What about those who are not already engaged? How would we get some interest from them?

**Jamie Clarke:** The starting point is encouraging. We have carried out quite extensive research with the public over the last six months. There is high and increased concern about climate change across the UK and different segments of the population. It is quite surprising. As researchers, we expected Covid to mean that people were less concerned about this big issue that has often been described as very hard for people to understand, but no, increases are there. There are nuances to it. Different groups are more interested in different aspects of climate change. Across the board, there is that feeling that the UK should step up and lead the way on the international stage and on policy spaces. There is latent support for the UK being bold in Glasgow, but the reality is that there is little general understanding of COPs in and of themselves. We have seen that consistently over the last 10 years of COPs. They do not resonate. They are often seen as technocratic meetings of politicians when they are understood.

At the moment, the UK as a population has not really registered COP yet. There is that space for the UK Government to lead a public engagement campaign that will be successful. Doing so has to realise the challenges of climate change. Climate change is not just an environmental issue; it is an issue around health, culture and our heritage, as well as our jobs and security. We need to be able to explain and have conversations with the wider public that relate to those wider issues that they care about: their values, their identity and what has been affected for them. Climate change has tended to speak with one voice, but we know that the public has lots of different passions. We have seen from Covid how the public are able to step up, embrace huge challenges and see their role in this collective challenge when it resonates with them.

Unfortunately, previous public engagement campaigns by UK Governments historically and others have not necessarily taken into account the social science understanding of the complexity of climate change. If we bring on board the way to relate to wider and different communities and use that to underpin our engagement around COP26, we will be successful. There is a fear, as happened previously—COP15 in

Copenhagen is probably the most salutary tale—about when the public is engaged with COPs but is given an unrealistic message. Messages like “This is the last chance to save the world” were quite prominent then. Politicians did not quite step up to that very high branch and we saw public concern plummet after COP15. We need to be very careful about the legacy.

Q310 **Mark Pawsey:** Jamie, are you suggesting that that kind of message is counterproductive?

**Jamie Clarke:** The evidence suggests that, yes. If you create a deadline that is unrealistic, which we will not be able to achieve, you put it completely beyond the bounds of possibility. That does not mean you cannot have a high bar and you should not aim for a high bar, but it cannot be unrealistic. If you just set that this is the one time that there is one decision, and if it does not go the right way, then that is the end of everything, naturally people—

Q311 **Mark Pawsey:** It is a bit of crying wolf, then.

**Jamie Clarke:** There are reasons why there is urgency. The climate crisis is very real and taking quicker urgent action at the biggest level is critical, but if we give a one-stop shop that this is now or never, then what happens afterwards? That is the question in the public’s mind.

Q312 **Mark Pawsey:** I will turn now to Josh and Anna about levels of perception among younger people. It is perceived that younger people are more concerned about the climate emergency than others, but is it just that we have some very articulate campaigners? It was interesting that Emily told us in the last session that at a COP you will see youth campaigners banging drums. Josh and Anna, is that how young people’s concerns should be expressed? Is the level of concern as high as we might think it is?

**Josh Tregale:** It is a really good point. Young people really do want to know about the climate crisis, but one of the underlying issues is that we do not learn about it in school adequately. It is always siloed off to optional subjects like further chemistry or geography. You do not have to take them. Teach the Future has conducted research with our parent charity SOS-UK and found that 68% of students want to learn more about the environment. We can send that research to you if that would be helpful, but there is a real demand from young people to know about the climate crisis. They really want to know more about it and take more steps.

Q313 **Mark Pawsey:** It is interesting that you should say that. The perception of many people would be that you do engage with these issues in education, and you engage them from one side of the argument only. You are suggesting that that is not the case.

**Josh Tregale:** No. We see that young people are really keen on this issue. A lot of young people know a lot about climate change and are very vocal about it. They are very good at pushing for change. We see that with school strikes and all the other campaigning that we have

around the world that young people are pushing for. Young people are ambitious and really care about this. A huge number of young people in the UK do not feel like they know enough about climate change and want to learn about it.

Q314 **Mark Pawsey:** Anna, do you think the same? Is there a real level of activism, or do most people not know enough? Are they the silent majority?

**Anna Brown:** There is quite a divide within young people in society. We all have some kind of knowledge. However, as part of Teach the Future, one of the key issues is that we are not taught about it. I did not do geography until sixth year, and that was the first time that I learned about climate change. It is an issue when you get to 17 or 18 years old and it is the first time you are being told anything about climate change, when it is the biggest issue we are facing in our generation.

Q315 **Mark Pawsey:** Is that because it has not been covered in traditional media sufficiently? Is there not enough coverage on TV, in local papers or on social media? Others would say that that is sometimes all we hear from those sources.

**Anna Brown:** Part of the issue is that, when we hear about climate change, it is purely science-based. We do not look at how it is inextricably linked to all the social justice issues as well. We cannot just have science-based climate solutions. We need to look at why these problems exist and how the people who are most affected by climate change are the ones most affected by social issues as well. We need to look at how they are linked and not just focus on the scientific aspects of it. These solutions cannot just work for us; they have to work for everyone.

The media talk about it, but we often talk about it in the wrong ways. We say, "Recycle"; we say, "Watch what you are eating." We do not look at how it is a bigger problem than that. We often find in the media that it is switched more to individuals rather than what needs to happen in society as a whole and how we will need to adapt.

You asked about the engagement of youth and how we have banged drums. I would like to point out that the reason that happened is because we were not being listened to. Climate change was not being treated as the issue it was. We did a hustings in Scotland a few weeks ago and one of our politicians told us to knock down their doors. The key point we made was that we have. We have multiple unanswered emails. People asked us to engage privately; we do that and do not get the responses. When we ask for meetings, we are only offered meetings when we are in education. We are told to prioritise our education, but that is very hard to do.

The only way we got our point made was by striking and banging the drums. If you look at COP25 in Madrid, there was significant action there. There were 500,000 people on the streets through youth strikes. Like

Jamie was saying earlier, it was the engagement of civil society that helped to make that change.

Q316 **Mark Pawsey:** Anna, you were suggesting earlier that the discussion of climate change was technical and scientific. Are you saying that it needs to be put in more personal terms so that people might understand what the significance is for them in their day-to-day life now and in years to come?

**Anna Brown:** Personal stories help. When you see a personal story in the news, you often remember that about it rather than facts. The public needs to know the facts, but we cannot just tell them, "We have this much electricity produced from renewables. We have this and this." We need to look at the social aspects of that as well. Where are the solar panels coming from? Electric cars are great, but they take double the carbon to produce. That is something that we do not really think about. We look at the end product. We need to look at who is producing them. Does it involve child labour? Does it face social issues? Are our actions going to help the global south or continue to push them down?

Q317 **Mark Pawsey:** I would like to turn, finally, to Jamie Peters. Jamie, is the discussion around climate change too technical and scientific, and not often put in terms that people can understand in terms of the impact on their day-to-day lives?

**Jamie Peters:** It can be. The last thing you said is a key point: how it relates to people's day-to-day lives. We have seen that the majority of the country wants to see Britain as a climate change leader, but the majority of people also want to know what part they can play. How do we make options easier for people? Rather than just communicating the absolute urgency of the situation, which it is, we also need to show how people can participate in this transition and how we and the Government can help people move from industries. Friends of the Earth Scotland has a big campaign around North Sea oil and gas. How do we get workers into clean industries?

How do we make this relevant for people's lives without it dominating their lives? You have mentioned the silent majority of the country a few times. It is absolutely right that people really care about this issue. I am one of the noisy ones. I work for Friends of the Earth. People are unlikely to devote themselves to the issue to the extent that an environmental NGO would. How do we get people on board with this transition, which is going to have to take place rapidly over the next decade?

Yes, you are right that the way that we communicate it can improve. It is not the be all and end all for this year for us to communicate COP. That can be quite technical. We need to bring people along with us, along with where the Government want to take the country and where science says that we need to go. As Anna says, a lot of that is stories, and a lot of that should be positive stories. We are looking at starting new industries in this country; that should be massively exciting. That tackles a lot of social issues, which Jamie Clarke has mentioned.

We are not going to get people on board by talking about parts per million of CO2 in the atmosphere; we have moved away from that. We know we need to limit warming to 1.5 degrees. How we bring that to life is through the policies that we do in Britain, but also around the world. We will take up that challenge in terms of communications. The Government will be well placed to talk about their long-term plan and how the policy is going to match the rhetoric.

Q318 **Ms Ghani:** Michelle, have you seen a difference between the UK Government's approach to public engagement on climate change and that of the Scottish Government?

**Michelle McGinty:** No. Both Governments are engaged in looking at how behaviour change campaigns, community engagement and business engagement can make a difference. I do not see any difference in that from our perspective.

Q319 **Ms Ghani:** I can see Jamie's hand is raised; I will come to him in a moment. Michelle, can I ask you what your top three priorities are for engaging with local communities and COP?

**Michelle McGinty:** Around the event specifically, we have some direct priorities. They include making sure that the city is supported and ready to host COP. It will obviously have a big physical impact on the city. In order to make sure that the COP can run smoothly and the climate outcomes can be achieved, the city needs to be running well. Our businesses and communities need to be supportive and feel supportive of that. That is absolutely the No. 1 priority.

In terms of other, wider priorities, we want to use COP to accelerate our behaviour change conversations with our citizens. As Anna and others have said, in governments, whether local or national, we are not good enough at that yet. COP has given us an opportunity to have a look at ourselves and accelerate how we are talking to our communities about that. We have started a new campaign, which I can talk about if you like. Those are long-term objectives that are designed to support our systems to get to our net zero target in 2030.

Those are the two priorities: making sure that the city can work and can host a successful COP, and how we use COP as an accelerator for the conversations that we need to have with our communities.

Q320 **Ms Ghani:** Jamie, you wanted to come in earlier about the differences between the UK Government and Scottish Government's approaches.

**Jamie Clarke:** At Climate Outreach, we have been working with the Scottish Government on and off for a number of years. Quite a while back, the Scottish Government recognised the importance of public engagement in delivering on their climate commitments. We have learned quite a lot. It is taking it from the supply-side conversation that has dominated for a long time into the reality of the need to transform society, both in terms of behaviour and the systems in our communities.

The focus has been on community engagement with the Scottish Government. They have run an informed approach to two-way conversations with their communities about the threat of climate change and what it means for the Scottish people and their communities. They have fed that back up into the policy discussions. That is exactly what the UK Government and other Governments around the world could look at doing. The Scottish Government are regarded as leading on this in the globe.

There are articles within the UNFCCC that ask and instruct countries to undertake activities like this, but in a way it has been the Cinderella issue of previous COPs. Article 6 of the Doha Amendment and article 11 of the Paris Agreement mean that any signatory is signed up to say that we need to do better and have more public engagement and climate literacy. We would hope that, in COP26, the UK could shine a light on to those articles.

We have an awful lot of experience, both in Scotland and in the social sciences in the UK, that puts us as leaders. We can implement those policies and raise them up within the process because they have not had the attention of countries. They are not in the NDCs and they are not resourced in that way. It will work for both the domestic agenda and the international agenda of supporting southern countries and engaging their populations to be more climate-literate.

Q321 **Ms Ghani:** Thank you, Jamie. That is very well put. I must reference one of your answers earlier about speaking to the communities and working with them. You spoke about the red wall. My anxiety is that communities that I hail from will not have the same conversation and we will leave those working-class communities behind. There is a lot of work still to be done.

My final question, very quickly, is to Jamie Peters. Jamie, can you compare and contrast the level of activity from the Scottish and UK Governments? What could or should we be doing better internationally? Where are other Governments doing better than us at this timetable in delivering COP?

**Jamie Peters:** In delivering COP internationally, we have seen in the past the amount of work that has to be done at the intersessionals, which are the talks in between the COPs each summer. We have to really get people on track and make sure that this pathway to 1.5 degrees is achieved. This year, we are having intersessionals virtually and they are not even going to be considered formal talks. That is a real challenge for the UK Government. It is a challenge that no other host nation has had for this. That really reiterates the need to postpone it, which is our preference, if it cannot be done safely physically. We would be behind in terms of that, because of the pandemic, of course.

I cannot speak too much to the role of the Scottish Government; I am based in London. Michelle would be the expert on the collaboration that she pointed out. Ensuring that public participation is done and that the

two Governments are seen to be working well together will be important. If we are trying to get 197 nations to work collaboratively, it is important that the UK Government can show they can do so with Scotland.

Q322 **Ms Ghani:** It is important to note on the record that you would prefer COP to be postponed at this stage.

**Jamie Peters:** That is the position not just of Friends of the Earth England, Wales and Northern Ireland, but Friends of the Earth International. There are two main reasons for this. The first is around the official talks themselves. They have been absolute superstars to make this meeting go well, but we even had technical issues with quite a modest number of people. Official UN climate change talks are incredibly visible. These will be the most visible talks that I have seen in terms of the world and the UK hosting it. You are looking at time difference issues. I have spoken to ex-negotiators who have raised their concerns around things like internet connectivity when trying to negotiate a text. I do not know if we have all had to suffer through UN climate talks in the past, but they will literally go through line by line inserting commas. It can be quite tedious. That cannot be done online when people are dropping in and out. Those are just the logistics.

I can tell you the second half of that. If you are going to have a virtual talk, you are not going to have that essential in-person meeting. A lot of the connections here are done in the corridors. In the most dramatic moments I have seen in previous COPs, if I could reference Paris and Durban, you get to a point when it is supposed to finish on the Friday; it runs to the Saturday; it goes on to the Sunday morning at 5.00 or 6.00 am. There is no text at one point. The chair calls for a halt and literally a huddle of negotiators comes together to iron things out. That reached the point of having the text. That would be completely removed, and that is what has got other COPs over the line.

I would like to go on the record to say that if we cannot do a COP in person with full civil society participation, it should be delayed. That does not impact the urgency or any other climate commitments. The Paris Agreement has a basis for nationally determined contributions to still progress. We saw just last week that two of the biggest polluters in the world historically, the UK and the USA, made huge progress and carried on momentum. We can continue the momentum while making sure we give this the best chance to succeed.

**Paul Howell:** I am going to come to Anna first to just build a little bit on what was said earlier. In my past life in business, one of the regular phrases was, "You heard what I said, but did you understand what I meant?" Particularly when you are talking about the terms that are used, whether it be "net zero", "1.5 degrees", or "COP26", there are two sides to this. Are people hearing what is being said? Are they understanding what is meant? Does it matter whether they understand? Anna, what is your view from a young people's perspective? Could you also give your interpretation of older people's understanding in that space and whether they need to understand?

**Anna Brown:** This is where education comes in. You become politically engaged to understand climate change. You teach it to yourself, which you have to do. You engage with media in different forms to learn more about it so you can engage. You teach yourself these terms. Personally, yes, I do understand these terms, but that is because I have spent time learning about them.

From a young people's perspective, we are not taught about them at school. When we talk about climate change in schools, we do not hear "net zero" or "1.5 degrees" apart from if the Paris Agreement is mentioned. There is a lot of debate around the term "net zero", carbon offset and what net zero really means for society.

I do not see a lot of society knowing what we mean by "COP26". Because I am the engaged one in my family, I often explain it. There is really a divide and there has to be more education on that. For example, 70% of teachers told us they did not feel adequately trained to teach about it. If teachers do not feel that they can tell students about it, how do students learn this? We all know the stories of learning something at school and going home to tell our parents about it. That sort of information is often transferred.

We should not dumb down this information. We should make sure it is explained when we are talking about it to the public, from "COP26" to "The Conference of the Parties means this". If we are saying it, we need to explain it. We should not treat the people who do not know like it is their fault, because the ways we have communicated mean that it has not been communicated correctly for everyone for understand.

Q323 **Paul Howell:** Thanks, Anna. Just picking up on what you said earlier, I assume that you will agree with me that any explanation needs to be in the whole of society in terms of the impact that is there. It is not just the technical definition that is there; it is the understanding of that in the broader context. Is that a fair assessment of your view?

**Anna Brown:** Yes. A lot of the time, when we use "net zero", "1.5 degrees" and "COP26", we give scientific explanations. We talk about what 1.5 degrees means and how we need renewable energy, but we never talk about what is happening now at 1.2 degrees and how that affects the global south. People connect better with information if we have these personal stories and really connect it to real-life events.

Q324 **Paul Howell:** I would absolutely endorse that, Anna. Josh, would you like to build on that?

**Josh Tregale:** Anna has answered about students and young people really well. I will not add anything to that. I will agree with the idea that, if you are told stories, it is so much easier to remember. That is what is really important, particularly when we are communicating about climate change. I remember in a chemistry lesson we were looking at atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. It was a really short module, but it was about tiny percentage changes in the atmosphere. That meant nothing; it

was just numbers. We just had to remember them for a test. It did not put into context what those changes meant in the real world.

I have had the privilege this year of working with people who live in places where people have lost islands because of sea level rises, or their families have been devastated by tropical cyclones. That is the impact of climate change. It is not those tiny numbers. That is the cause. We really need to learn about the stories and the real-world impact that it has.

Touching on the point that you said about older people, I am not particularly well placed to do this as a young person, but one of the frustrations I have found when I have talked to leaders in my local area and people of influence who are older is that they do not know lots about these topics. They do not know what COP26 is. Even people who work in schools and teach climate change aspects that already exist in the curriculum do not know lots of these terminologies or how to explain them.

One of the frustrations that I have found with talking to leaders in my local area is that they pretend that they know what they are talking about. They do not like to admit that they do not know stuff about some of these topics. That causes problems because they try to explain in an eloquent way how something works when they do not know. It seems to throw the conversation off. It might be a bit of a pessimistic view that sometimes people do not like to accept that there is stuff that they do not know, but that is a really important aspect that the whole of society needs. That might not have answered the question particularly well.

**Q325 Paul Howell:** Your answer was excellent. To empathise with it, as a new MP in this Parliament, I can absolutely give you a long list of the things I do not know; trust me. You are right that there are people who will not admit that they do not know something. It is a scary thought that the people who are supposed to be passing the education out are not as informed as we would like them to be. You have raised a very important point and I thank you for it.

In terms of an understanding of the broader community, I am going to move on to Jamie Clarke for his perspective in terms of the understanding of this terminology of "1.5 degrees", "COP26" and "net zero". How well do you think the public as a whole, first, understands it and, secondly, can relate to what difference it means if we do something about it?

**Jamie Clarke:** Generally, from the research we have done, there are very low levels of understanding of the technical terms out there. Whether that is a problem is questionable. If we need to use terms, using the lowest number consistently is important for the research. People are still getting slightly confused by "global warming" and "climate change"; now we have "climate chaos". People who are not necessarily heavily engaged, like the rest of us when we do not understand a subject, need to have familiar terms. We need to keep the lexicon limited for the general public.

That does not mean that they are always a barrier. If we can link them to the bigger issue of climate change that they relate to and what people care about, whether that is the impact on their communities or other communities, those terms can resonate still. The challenge is not bringing the technocratic speak that the policy people are constantly focused on into the public discourse just as a matter of fact. We know that the information deficit model is not successful, and Anna and Josh have illustrated that really nicely. Just giving people more and more facts will not enable them to necessarily understand it, but we should contextualise it with stories and images that they can relate to and understand.

We should give them efficacy over acting as well. We have seen consistently that people care, but unless there are actions that they can get involved in or see others they relate to getting involved in, they do not feel like they have any ownership over that issue. Those actions need to be relevant. In the past, we have been encouraged to take small actions like changing a light bulb to save the world. We have consistently seen that the public questions that: "If it is that big of an issue and all you are asking me to do is change a light bulb, how is that such a big crisis?" Again, this is about bringing the understanding, and the UK is a leader in this, of how the public relates to these issues, and then turning that into communications from the Government and others to use a fact-based starting point of illustrative narratives that resonate with different publics.

Q326 **Paul Howell:** There are many parts to communication, but one of the others is obviously the channel of communication as well. Different channels hit different people, whether it be social media, TV or whatever. There is obviously a distinct population that still sticks to newspapers.

I also resonate with what you are saying there in terms of getting the story out. I saw a little cartoon strip yesterday. It was something along the lines of "It is only one Costa Coffee cup that is being thrown away." The next picture said, "Said 1.3 billion people." It gave a connection between the small decision and the big impact. Part of what we have here is trying to get the messages across that show that significance.

One of the challenges—again I will ask for your opinion, and Anna and Josh may want to come back on this—is how we get past the message of "What difference are we going to make when China or whoever is doing all of that polluting?"

**Jamie Clarke:** Consistently, the UK public say, "We want to be leaders on the international stage and we want to lead going forward." The reasons behind that can be different for different organisations. Those who are business leaders will want to do so because of the business opportunities of being leaders. Those who are minded around social justice recognise the moral imperative of leading. There are a variety of reasons why we as a country would want to lead on that. While we may not have the biggest carbon footprint as a nation, per person we have quite a significant one. It is a lot bigger than the average Chinese

person's footprint. There are myriad reasons why you can say that the UK and individuals should be taking action.

We also need to show, through messages and people that we can relate to, why that is important. A Government figure encouraging us to do this will be much less influential over a young person than one of their peers, for example. That is where Anna and Josh are doing so well in their work.

I just want to reiterate that teachers often want to do the same thing. Having worked in education, I still hear conversations about the ozone layer and acid rain when it comes to climate change. They are bringing in their knowledge from 20 or 30 years ago and trying to translate it into climate change. They want to do better, but they are not given the support to do so. Centralising climate change in the national curriculum would be a really good step forward.

**Anna Brown:** Just to echo what Jamie said, one of the key issues is that we often dismiss our own emissions compared with other countries like China and the USA. In reality, Scotland has one of the highest carbon footprints per person in the whole world. We should look at what we can individually do, but not also put the blame on individuals. If these solutions are not accessible, we cannot carry them out.

The biggest thing we have probably ever seen is everything with plastic straws, but we did not look at the consequences of that. It has been really hard for some disabled people because they need plastic straws. We need to look at how we communicate these changes and how accessible they are. We do the school strikes, which work for us. If you want people to engage with Government through long meetings, people cannot do that if they have to work.

We need to engage in ways that are accessible for everyone and take ownership of our actions, what the Government have to do and how the Government can make it accessible for individuals to take action. If someone asks, "How can I as an individual help?" our answer is usually, "Lobby the Government and participate in the movement." All renewable things for your home are a lot more expensive. They are not accessible to all aspects of society. There are lots of other issues. We need to look at the whole picture, which is where the social justice aspect comes back in.

**Paul Howell:** Thanks, Anna. I absolutely endorse messages like that. I do not think the general public would know that we are more polluting than China on a per-capita basis, for example. Those sorts of messages might just encourage people. I thank everybody for their inputs today.

Q327 **Alan Brown:** If we just stick to the public education and wider engagement theme, the negotiations programme for COP26 includes inter-Government talks about public engagement, education and climate change. These issues have to be discussed through the so-called Action for Climate Empowerment dialogues. I will go to Jamie Clarke first. Can you advise how successful these discussions have been to date? What are the key outstanding issues in public engagement and education that need

to be resolved through these Government dialogues at COP26?

**Jamie Clarke:** Action for Climate Empowerment is a crucial part of the UNFCCC process. If I am being honest, having been involved in them, it is quite peripheral to the central discussions. That is a real problem. Within the UK, more than 59% of emissions are now related to societal and individual action, as the Committee on Climate Change said. It is the same around the world. People have the right to know about climate change. They need to know and understand what actions and impacts climate change is having on their lives, but Governments are not stepping up to their commitments under the ACE protocol.

At the moment, there are annual talks, which are great. Case studies and process are often discussed, but there is no real set of protocols that can hold Governments to account. There are no principles or criteria. There is a lack of infrastructure. There is no monitoring or reporting on the process.

A key focus for Glasgow should be on raising the profile of the ACE side of the UNFCCC. The UK can join with other nations like Italy, Costa Rica and Scotland, which are world leaders in this, in pushing forward this agenda. We could see a Glasgow declaration that really highlights the importance of education and empowerment around the world. It could create a fund to support that happening, especially for those in the global south who do not have access to the same education. The UK can be a real leader in this. If we want to be global Britain and use the resources at our disposal, our academic understanding, our cultural and advertising capabilities and our education, this is a great opportunity for the UK to step up and show leadership in a crucial area on climate action.

Q328 **Alan Brown:** Do you think there is a will from the UK Government or the UK president to say, "Look at Scotland. Look at Italy. This is the starting point for how we best do this engagement."?

**Jamie Clarke:** Yes. There is learning. We are at the front in some areas in the UK, and Italy is in the others, in terms of the curriculum. Costa Rica has an awful lot of climate outreach activities going on.

We need case studies. They are carrots and incentives to show what it looks like. But we also need the stick of saying, "You need to be held accountable as countries that have signed up to the Paris Agreement and the Doha Amendment. Every year at COPs, we would like to see how well you are performing on enabling your citizens to understand the issue and be able to engage with it successfully."

Q329 **Alan Brown:** Would the stick be, effectively, naming and shaming through monitoring and reporting?

**Jamie Clarke:** Yes, absolutely. If it is integrated into the NDCs, a protocol and a process are already in place. One could do it in a positive way as well. Lots of lights are shone on the NDCs by certain organisations. We would like to illustrate what countries like Scotland and

Costa Rica are doing well, but there is the potential that others could shine the light on where that is not being implemented well.

We know the USA is quite interested, under the new Administration, in pushing forward on this agenda. There is a lot of opportunity to drive a big shift in Glasgow if we highlight this, with a soft stick behind us; that is possibly the way to put it.

Q330 **Alan Brown:** If I can just quickly turn to Anna and Josh, both of you have given examples where you think there is not enough climate change education in the curriculum at the moment. You have been very clear about that. Is there anything the UK COP26 presidency do in terms of trying to resolve that wider public engagement and education at a multi-country level?

**Anna Brown:** One of the things to look at is how we see education. We have the core curriculum and the formal education system, but we also have many levels of community education. It is essential that we invest in these. You can educate through groups like Girlguiding, Scouts and local hubs with Scottish Environment LINK. It is making sure we are working with all aspects to reach people. However, the easiest way to engage every young person is through formal education.

Adults need to make sure that the work done with trade unions is implemented. They also need to make sure that they listen back. We are very good at talking about what we want to see, but we are not very good at listening back and compromising. We need to make sure we do that as we inform more people about this.

Make sure you engage with young people. We have sat here and said that young people need to know this, but there are also lots of young people who know about it all. The issue is that we are often dismissed or not listened to because we are young people. For example, Teach the Future Scotland has had quite a lot of success working with the Scottish Government. We are having continuous meetings and working on policy asks. However, in England, Gavin Williamson has ignored the campaign 18 times. That is one of the examples of where there are differences.

We should make sure we work and listen to people. We should also make sure we do that on a wider level with adults. They are harder to educate outside the formal education system, which is why it is so important that we do not repeat the mistakes of not educating the younger generations.

As for ACE specifically, I would say it has not been very effective considering we are still in the position of large parts of society who do not know enough about climate change.

**Josh Tregale:** I will just echo the point that it is really important, when we talk about curriculum change that specifically affects young people, that young people are involved in the process. It is important that it is not top-down or just spoken to young people. There should be active engagement both ways. It is really important to listen and have those conversations so that it is not enforced upon people that this is how they

are learning. There should be a conversation about “What is it you want to learn? How is it you want to learn? What would be most helpful?”

That will really help this to spread beyond schoolchildren and university students. If something is interesting, people tell their parents. Their parents might tell their friends. That is how it spreads. We have seen some of these cases when there have been campaigns in schools to reduce smoking, drugs or other behaviours that there has been harm from. These sorts of conversations that have gone both ways have had more impact, rather than it being a top-down, “This is what you are doing” approach.

Q331 **Chair:** Anna, if it is okay with you, I will write to Gavin Williamson for you and ask that you get an answer. I will have a look at that answer as well when it comes back.

My last question, because I am conscious that we are running over, is around how the Government and the Cabinet Office are engaging with all of your groups. It is probably slightly different for you, Michelle, because you are going to be in the mix of it, running everything, so I will ask the other witnesses. This is both on the running and delivery of COP—we have obviously had a debate today about whether it should be postponed, hybrid, physical or digital—and this issue of legacy of COP and what is going to happen after the conference in November. I am just keen to get a very quick answer from each of you about your experience of engaging with the Cabinet Office on these two issues. Is it good? Is it bad? Is there anything you want to add?

**Jamie Peters:** Yes. We have been involved in the Civil Society and Youth Advisory Council. It has a broad range of people on it. There have been genuine attempts at that. I have seen that replicated throughout the country. I would say it is about to be beyond just NGOs like ourselves and reaching out to the youth groups or areas of the country that may not have felt part of the movement or the transition. There have been genuine attempts. We will see how that looks over the next few months if concerns are heard. We would thank the Government for that effort up to this point.

Going forward, in terms of legacy, we cannot stress enough how it is important to see Glasgow as a point of a pathway and not to have that drop of momentum that we saw in Copenhagen. We need to bring the country with us for this transition. The UK showing that its policies are conscious to what we are hearing in terms of where we need to get to would really help and push us through Glasgow to continue that transition.

Q332 **Chair:** Jamie Clarke, have you had a similarly good experience?

**Jamie Clarke:** We have been very impressed by the initiatives from the Cabinet Office of trying to reach out to wider groups. I am sure better could be done in hindsight, but it has generally been very positive. We have also been talking with and providing research understanding how to reach wider audiences to the Cabinet Office. We ran something called

Britain Talks Climate, which was a huge research programme looking at different communities. The Cabinet Office has been very receptive to that.

It is clear that there have been a lot of efforts in the run-up to COP26, focus there and attempts to bring in the legacy. They have tended to be focused on a singular view that behaviour change is the next legacy. The public is much more complex than that. Behaviour change is part of the legacy, but there needs to be a bit more joined-up, fuller-spectrum approach to the public's involvement in COP and beyond, which brings in behaviour change but also brings in those wider policy and substantive elements.

An expert advisory group should work alongside and across those Departments to make it fully effective and the most impactful it is. There should be some level of co-ordination of the public engagement so that it is complementary as a legacy going forward. We just need to invest in public engagement around climate change in the same way as we invest in the finance and technology side of things.

The key element that is going to make our policies, our finances and our technology work in reality is the public. Bringing in the expertise to oversee that and see a joined-up thinking approach to public engagement is going to be key to enabling the country to hit our impressively ambitious targets of 78% by 2030. That is going to take a hell of a lot of work across the country and society. It is a big challenge and there are great opportunities.

Q333 **Chair:** Josh from Teach the Future, have you been happy with your engagement with the Government?

**Josh Tregale:** Both Anna and I are involved in more groups than just Teach the Future. It seems to vary between the groups. I can talk on behalf of Mock COP26, which is another organisation that I am working with. Our involvement with the Cabinet Office with that campaign has been really good. I have been extremely impressed with it. We have had regular meetings and felt really supported. We have had a meeting with Alok Sharma and been fully supported through that process. We have also been put in contact with embassies in other countries so we can widen the reach, because Mock COP26 is international. That experience has been hugely positive.

Going back to Teach the Future, we are extremely grateful for you offering to help us with the issue we had with reaching Gavin Williamson. That is really helpful, but there seems to be a discrepancy between campaigns. It is sometimes difficult to understand what the differences are and how different campaigns are treated differently. In my experience with Mock COP26, they have been really helpful. The youth engagement team has been great.

**Anna Brown:** It is very dependent on the campaign. One of the key things is that we get in a bubble. We have a group of youth

representation like Mock COP, and we stick with that group. We always propose open calls, where you can engage with a lot more people and make sure that a lot more people have influence. Just like groups of adults in civil society, the youth have lots of different opinions and views on all these issues. It is important that, just like you would with adults, you engage with lots of different groups of youth and not just one group. There are also accessibility issues. All the meetings we are offered are during school time, so we need to finish our education and work that out.

I am part of Fridays for Future as well. We have had some meetings set up, but it takes a lot for that to happen. That is part of the issue. Unless you are willing to dedicate that time, it is very difficult to have these meetings. We should also make sure these meetings are open for people who are not as engaged in the climate crisis to help engage with the aspects of public society as well. There are large disparities in it, but overall it has been pretty good so far. There just needs to be more done.

**Chair:** We are going to call this session to an end. I am so sorry that we ran over by 15 minutes. Thank you all for sticking with us. Thank you to Anna Brown and Josh Tregale from Teach the Future, Jamie Clarke from Climate Outreach, Jamie Peters from Friends of the Earth, and Michelle McGinty from Glasgow City Council. Thank you to my colleagues on the Committee.