

Scottish Affairs Committee

Oral evidence: [Renewable Energy in Scotland, HC 51](#)

Monday 5 July 2021

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

Questions 140 - 184

Witnesses

[I](#): Dave Moxham, Deputy General Secretary, Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC); and Bob MacGregor, National Officer, Unite the Union.



Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Bob MacGregor and Dave Moxham.

Q140 **Chair:** Welcome to the Scottish Affairs Committee and the fourth oral evidence session in our inquiry into renewable energy in Scotland. We are delighted that we have two representatives from the trade union movement in Scotland, who I will now let introduce themselves, starting with you, Mr Moxham.

Dave Moxham: Thank you, Chair. I am the deputy general secretary at the STUC. I am also a recently departed member of the Scottish Government's Just Transition Commission. The STUC's role is to support our affiliates—and particularly relevant here our energy affiliates, but looking to translate their industrial concerns as part of the economic strategy in Scotland.

Chair: Thank you for that.

Bob MacGregor: I am a regional officer with Unite the Union, and I am here to give evidence on behalf of the union. I was responsible, and am responsible, for the BiFab yards, so that is why I have been asked to come along today.

Q141 **Chair:** Thank you for that. You are both more than welcome. Thank you for your time with the Scottish Affairs Committee this afternoon.

You both gave very detailed submissions, which we are very grateful for, but in your submissions you give detailed proposals about how we could maybe create green jobs and upskill the workforce throughout the renewable sectors. Can I start by asking what you make of what you have seen in the UK and Scottish Governments' plans, and how far they are from what you are proposing? We will start with Mr Moxham.

Dave Moxham: Most of the components in the proposals we put forward are covered to some extent by the respective Governments, but there is a lack of ambition of scale to a degree, although I think that is changing. There is a lack of a recognition of urgency and probably too little emphasis, from our point of view, on the direct role of the public sector in financing, and also on the secondary role of the public sector in terms of co-ordination.

We have some amazing opportunities, but also some last-gasp opportunities in other areas of the supply chain, including first mover opportunities in a range of developing sectors. If we are going to show not just that we can achieve a just transition but that we can move from the current position, where we are a net importer, if you look at the overall renewable economy, towards a position where we are a net exporter, the levels of investment, of general co-ordination and of inter-governmental co-ordination will have to step up a significant gear or two.

Q142 **Chair:** What about you, Mr MacGregor? Again, we are very grateful for your submission. How far is what you are proposing from what you have



seen from the UK and Scottish Governments?

Bob MacGregor: As Dave said, it is not a million miles away from what we are proposing, but what we are proposing is a faster paced move and a focus on a strategy that delivers jobs for the UK economy and into communities in the UK so that the public benefit will be felt across the country. We are looking for investment in infrastructure, not importing it—make it here; build it here; use it here. That is what we are looking for and that is what our strategy is all about.

Q143 **Chair:** In your submission, you raised concerns about the treatment of workers in Scotland's renewables sector. Can you maybe outline for the Committee what these issues are and if you have any suggestions about how the UK Government might contribute to some resolutions?

Bob MacGregor: The issues are about safety, and about well-paid jobs that are going to be attractive to people to transition into. What we have seen—what we have witnessed—is that a lot of migrant labour is used, I think because it is cheap, and that health and safety is not what it should be. People are actively discouraged from joining trade unions. The companies running these projects, or bringing projects to the UK shores, are using migrant labour. They will not recognise the unions. They do not want unions to be recognised because it is plain that if there is recognition, safety is much better, the pay is much better, and the terms and conditions for the workers are much better. The Scottish Government have a Fair Work Convention, and we are looking to build on that and have fair work, and well-paid jobs in the offshore industry that will be attractive to people because the demise of the offshore industry is going to go hand in hand with increase in renewables.

Q144 **Chair:** I take it you would agree with most, if not all, of that, Mr Moxham. What is your view about the employers that you see in the renewables sector in Scotland?

Dave Moxham: I echo and support what Bob said. We can give specific examples from the RMT union of the payment of below living-wage wage levels to offshore workers involved in maintenance. There is a range of examples.

There is a big question here, which Bob correctly mentioned: the obvious and future transition from offshore oil and gas to offshore wind. For many years—I will not go into this in too much detail, because Committee members will be aware of it—we have had an economy in offshore oil and gas which has seen an increase from an already high base in the numbers of self-employed, agency and umbrella company-employed workers, and while we are not in favour of that, you could almost argue, certainly at certain skill levels, that there has been a pay-off for that because those jobs have enjoyed a premium by comparison with average wages. While the offshore renewables sector will certainly produce some high-paid jobs, it seems unlikely that we are looking at that kind of level of high-paid work and therefore, if that lower level—even if some jobs will



HOUSE OF COMMONS

pay significantly above average wages—is combined with similar employment conditions, I think you will have the overall double whammy of a future workforce that has less pay, and also maintains that lack of security that is frankly the case for many of our offshore oil and gas workers. At the heart of that, there is a question about how that labour is regulated.

Another issue—I am sure we will come on to this—is the creation of a decent supply chain. Certainly for construction and other phases of these contracts, you are still talking about contracts that may be only a year or two long, depending on the nature of the work, and the task for us is to create a supply chain so that we can add to the security of employment. We are not even jumping from contract to contract at the moment because there are hardly any contracts, but we are not in that situation where people are on that eternal merry-go-round, not knowing where their next secure contract will come from.

Q145 Chair: We will most definitely come on to the supply chain. We have already discovered that there are huge issues with this and it is something that we want to inquire into quite stringently in this Committee.

Is there going to be an issue around recruitment, if we are to realise our ambition and get people into the green workforce? I am thinking generally about how we make this attractive to young people, for example, when they are considering their options and career opportunities. Mr Moxham?

Dave Moxham: We are going to need a better sell on the renewables sector and the just transition in general, and that is currently quite hard to do when the opportunities, particularly at certain stages of production, are limited. It gives us no pleasure to do this, but opportunities have been published as “limited” by organisations like ours because we have to tell it how it is and not necessarily how we would like it to be.

Then there is the issue of transition from the oil and gas sector—I am sure we will come on to this, too—the transferability of skills and regulation. One of the points that people sometimes miss in this discussion is that even though we expect net numbers in offshore oil and gas to fall in the period ahead, such is the demography of the workforce that there are still going to be a lot of new recruits in offshore oil and gas, certainly into the 2030s. That is a view you can take irrespective of how quickly you think production could, or should, fall off in the North Sea. The offer at the moment is partly how to get people into offshore oil and gas with the clear knowledge that that is not going to be their eventual work destination. It is almost a kind of double message just now. I do not have figures for this, but if you ask me who is going to be recruiting more in the next 10 years—offshore oil and gas, or offshore renewables—it is still probably going to be offshore oil and gas, but by the time these people are 30 or 40, that is not where they are going to be. Getting that right is absolutely fundamental.



Q146 **Chair:** To you, Mr MacGregor. Mr Moxham is saying that we are going to need a flexible and quite adaptable workforce, given there is a massive transition going on—the just transition—and obviously it is a sector that we are seeking to grow exponentially in the course of the next few years. Do we have the necessary skills in Scotland? What do we need to do to get them in place? Will there be issues around recruitment?

Bob MacGregor: I don't believe there will be issues around recruitment as long as the jobs are attractive enough, as long as the pay is good enough and as long as the terms and conditions are good enough. There does need to be a plan to train people for these future technologies because we are not just talking about offshore wind—we are talking about a whole move to the green economy. We need people to be trained and ready to do it. You are talking about apprenticeships and making sure that if transition is required—Dave is right that the oil and gas sector is not going away any time soon, but it will happen eventually—how do we make that transition work for the benefit of workers and the benefit of the economy? That is what needs to be looked at.

I don't know any specifics about what will need to be done to train people, because there obviously are already some transferable skills in the offshore oil and gas industry. People can transfer to the installation of wind farms and obviously the construction of the wind farms is also important because it creates a lot of workstreams. Dave is right that some of these things will be fairly short term, but as long as there is enough of a stream of work, it will become attractive to people. These things take about a year to install, but if there is a queue of them to give security of work, and the companies doing it are giving good terms and conditions, you will not have any problem getting the workforce.

Chair: Thank you for that. I will pass over now to my colleague John Lamont.

Q147 **John Lamont:** Good afternoon to our two witnesses. My first question is on the UK Government's 10-point plan for a green industrial revolution. I would like your assessment as to how many jobs that plan is likely to create.

Dave Moxham: I have seen the estimates attached to the investment levels per job, and they do not necessarily appear unrealistic to us. My question—I am being frank and I am just going to stick it out there—is that it is 10 times too unambitious. We have put forward—we do not expect this to happen overnight—some research from Transition Economics that suggests that those investment levels would do for Scotland alone, and we do not apologise for that level of ambition. You can say we would like to see it 10 times as ambitious.

To return to a point I was making earlier, are we going to make clear decisions on prioritisation? I think it would be a mistake to make clear decisions on prioritisation where we still have emerging potential industries where we could get a first-mover advantage as well as the



HOUSE OF COMMONS

massive expansion we are hoping for from offshore, potentially a little bit more of the rebooting of onshore wind as well, and don't even get me started on green retrofitting and transport policy. We agree totally with the sums and the points—*[Inaudible]*—but we just do not believe the ambition is anywhere near what it needs to be if we are going to hit targets and hit them in a way that also guarantees a just transition.

Q148 **John Lamont:** What you have just said is that you agree with the estimates in terms of job creation, but you think the investment should be higher or greater.

Dave Moxham: Yes. Sorry if I took too long to say make that very simple point, but that is my main point.

Q149 **John Lamont:** Thank you. Mr MacGregor, would you agree with that?

Bob MacGregor: Yes, I do agree that it is not ambitious enough, but there is an ambition in there to attract private sector investment as well, but that all needs to be linked. If people are getting these contracts, they need to deliver jobs on the ground in the UK. You cannot be doing what has been done in the past—we have all be pretty disappointed at how things have unfolded, especially with the offshore wind sector, and the lack of work that it gives to the UK and workers in the UK. I do agree that the plan is unambitious. Any money that is spent needs to be focused on bringing jobs to the UK and well-paid jobs at that.

Q150 **John Lamont:** That is a nice link into the Scottish Government's green jobs fund. I suppose you have maybe answered the question already, but how should that fund be used to generate the most jobs?

Bob MacGregor: As long as it is targeted at the right places and strategies, and it is all about having a proper, robust industrial strategies that are going to deliver jobs for Scotland and the UK, obviously that fund is going to help. It will help companies get to where they need to be to develop the technologies that we are going to need. I think it will be helpful, but it needs to be targeted in the right areas and on the right technologies. Hydrogen is definitely going to be one of the future technologies that funds need to be focused on and companies that are accessing those funds should be heading towards that focus that delivers what we need for our heavy transport and for the local authorities, and for buses—all that needs to be focused on. The money needs to be focused for that and on developing the transport strategy that gives everyone a greener country.

Q151 **John Lamont:** Mr Moxham, do you agree about the way the green jobs fund should be used in Scotland?

Dave Moxham: Yes. I agree. There is a place for part-funding and more, in terms of scale, to be directed at demonstrator and innovation projects, some of which would be sited in Aberdeen. It is difficult for us at the moment because the funding does not match the need or ambition, but there would not be any enormous disagreement from us about the



HOUSE OF COMMONS

targets that have been identified. I just question how many we are going to be able to fund.

What is important here, and I guess we have seen some of this with the North Sea transition deal, is that both Governments are able to match and support the private sector where necessary in what are fairly clearly stated ambitions for hydrogen and carbon capture to marshal that funding, to support that, but then in return to require guarantees on job quality and, where relevant, the local supply chain as well. I see real opportunities for partnership here, but it has to be more ambitious and must retain that conditionality, which is absolutely vital for a just transition.

John Lamont: Thank you. That is all from me, Chair.

Q152 **Wendy Chamberlain:** Thank you, both witnesses, for your time today.

I previously worked in military resettlement and one of the areas of focus in the early part of the 2010s was service leavers coming out and looking to work in oil and gas. A key thing that I remember is an issue around the recognition of different skills transitioning into new sectors.

Can I come to you first, Mr Moxham? What are the barriers facing people transitioning from oil and gas into renewables? Or are there barriers generally, beyond oil and gas?

Dave Moxham: I will not try to do this for you—I am sure you have already done it with other witnesses—but it is not a homogenous workforce and some of it is more transferable than other parts. There is a development-stage cohort—the lawyers and other people like that, and in some cases the geologists—that may not have a particular difficulty. That is more about where the demand is. There is certainly a range of what should be relatively easily transferred skills around logistics in some cases, certainly around maintenance and ongoing support. Of the three areas where workers tell us that they currently have problems, No. 1 is that there are simply not enough opportunities, but I won't labour the point about the fact that there are not enough jobs to go into just now. Secondly, some actual skills: the Just Transition Commission that I am a member of recently came out with the idea of a skills guarantee, which would allow people who clearly have the right disciplines but need to learn particular skills to have very easy access to training. The third area is a little bit more about regulation and red tape. You won't often hear a trade unionist complaining about red tape, but they are in a very specific way. We do have a significant number of people complaining that they are doing courses that are very similar, if not nearly identical, to the offshore standards they already adhere to for oil and gas, but they are asked to do more or less exactly the same thing, often at their own cost and nearly always in their own time. With that little caveat that you should not take me as being anti-red tape in all circumstances, there is definitely an issue about the regulatory regimes, how they are aligned, and how the appropriate skills and regulatory bodies work together to



HOUSE OF COMMONS

make a simpler path when, frankly, the qualifications are already met and in many cases, massively exceeded.

Q153 **Wendy Chamberlain:** I think what you are saying is that it is about plugging the gaps as opposed to badging things so that people potentially have to repeat. That seems to be an issue.

Dave Moxham: Exactly. That has come through strongly from offshore oil and gas workers in the last year and a half. They frankly do not see the point of having to pay for and spend time on doing things that they are already highly proficient at.

Wendy Chamberlain: Often it is done at workers' own cost. You are right. Thank you.

Mr MacGregor, do you have anything to add on that point?

Bob MacGregor: No. Dave has covered everything I would have said.

Q154 **Wendy Chamberlain:** Thank you. We will stay with you, then. Scottish Renewables polling suggests that 77% of those in the oil and gas workforce would be positive about the move to join the renewable energy sector. From speaking to your members and what else you are aware of, is that an accurate reflection of views?

Bob MacGregor: Our view is quite reflective of that but, again, the jobs need to be of equal value. People will not move towards that sector if the jobs are low-paid and the terms and conditions are not great. So, no, the polling does reflect what we hear but the reality is that the jobs need to be of the same value to attract the workforce.

Q155 **Wendy Chamberlain:** So people potentially recognise that the future is in renewables and there is a need to transition, but are reluctant to do so if the opportunities are not valid for them.

Bob MacGregor: Yes. People are not going to move into an industry that gives them a worse way of living and generates less money for them and their families, so they will go elsewhere. They will look at other options rather than offshore wind.

Q156 **Wendy Chamberlain:** Thank you. Earlier on in the session, we talked about supply chains as well as temporary contracts, and so on—those barriers. If we can overcome those barriers with the right policies, what do you believe is the scale of the opportunities, Mr Moxham?

Dave Moxham: There is an enormous scale of opportunity. The research that I spoke about earlier talks about up to about 90,000 jobs in offshore wind, but it also talks about as few as 20,000 in offshore wind. There is a massive disparity in the opportunities based upon levels of investment and getting industrial policy right, but clearly there would be significant number of jobs. Think of the size of the offshore oil and gas cohort. It is, if not comparable, a quite significant opportunity, but there are so many caveats to that in terms of how we get there, the operation of things we may come on to, and a range of market and other mechanisms that are



required to do it, but looking at the kind of proposed gigawatt output for offshore wind in the period ahead, and obviously the pressing need for decarbonisation, the opportunity is amazing. However, the opportunity around construction—the capital phase of offshore wind—cannot be spoken about as something that could happen in 10 years' time. We are in the last-chance saloon when it comes to the construction phase. At the moment we construct nearly no part of an offshore wind installation. We have no propellor capacity in Scotland at all. We have to be slightly careful and look at the phasing. The big number includes urgent action on the capital side of the supply chain stuff, for which, I would say, we have a matter of months and years left to retain that through policy.

Q157 Wendy Chamberlain: Clearly, without that capacity, we have no supply chain to speak of.

Dave Moxham: Sorry if I am interrupting, but it is a massive component. We may come on to this, but hitting your CfD of 60% without getting the capital phase right is incredibly difficult, I would say arguably impossible, to do. There is also a massive place thing about that. Lots of those jobs we have talked about in the first phase—those development-phase jobs; jobs that are likely to be sited in places such as Aberdeen—are all very welcome, but go to somewhere like Fife or somewhere down the east coast, take away that construction phase and you are also losing that place element for the communities and towns that will thrive or not. It is important, when we do the jobs numbers, to do the type of job and place calculation at the same time.

Q158 Wendy Chamberlain: Clearly.

Mr MacGregor, just very quickly, you may want to say something about BiFab, but Mr Moxham has talked a wee bit about offshore wind. Do you have any other thoughts about the wider renewables sector. The Committee was in Orkney last week, specifically looking at marine renewables. Is there any idea of the scale of the opportunity there?

Bob MacGregor: Like David, I think the opportunities are massive, if the investment is put in to the renewables sector, and the investment needs to be targeted. There needs to be a condition attached to any public money that is spent that the majority of the construction happens in the UK. What happened with BiFab and the contracts that they should have won but did not win is a national scandal—these companies are getting these contracts and making things halfway across the world, and then floating them around on these big ships, damaging the planet, when we should have the supply chain in the UK that can deliver anything. CS Wind closed as well. We should be taking the bull by the horns here. The Government should even be taking these places over and saying, "Right, this is going to be a national energy sector. We are going to run it and we are going to take the profits from it." At the end of the day, it is the public that is buying the electricity and that pays for these projects, and it is the future cost of electricity that is making these projects get done, so the public is paying for it and the public should benefit from good-



quality jobs in the UK, on the shores of Scotland, because we will be staring off our shorelines looking at these wind projects for the rest of our lives.

Wendy Chamberlain: Thank you very much.

Chair: Thank you, Wendy. We are going to change the order around a bit to help out Sally-Ann Hart, who needs to be in the Chamber soon.

Q159 **Sally-Ann Hart:** Thank you Chair, and good afternoon to Mr MacGregor and Mr Moxham. My questions are also to do with reskilling and retraining aspects. We have heard in previous evidence sessions that there are a great many skills in oil and gas and defence, and other sectors, that are transferable to the renewable energy sector. I think we can expect that perhaps some oil and gas companies will be moving into the renewable energy supply sector and it makes sense for them to retrain their own employees as they move forward. Who do you think should pay for the reskilling and retraining of the oil and gas workforce for employment in the renewables sector, and why? Can I go to Mr MacGregor first?

Bob MacGregor: Yes; thank you. Who should pay? Whoever needs the skills. That is the short answer, because the training needs to be done and these companies will make money of the back of repurposing their oil and gas refineries to do hydrogen or whatever they need. Whatever there is a market for in the future, these companies will invest in, and they need to invest in the training as well. If that is assisted by Government, that is fine, but it is whoever is going to make the money off it that needs to make the investment in the training, in my opinion.

Sally-Ann Hart: Thank you. Mr Moxham, do you have anything to add?

Dave Moxham: I broadly agree with that. It is a relatively short answer. Clearly as you suggest, and I would go further, I do not think offshore oil and gas companies are going to go into renewables; they are in the mix now. They are bidding through the ScotWind project, and Total is a 50% owner of Seagreen, I think, or certainly one of our most recent offshore projects. They are already in the game and as you suggest they will have a responsibility, and probably an incentive to some degree, to undertake that retraining. We are very keen in the period ahead, which I guess you would not be surprised at, that the type of offshore collective agreements that apply to oil and gas should also apply in the emerging renewables sector, because that allows unions, which have always been strong advocates both of employer responsibility for training but also trainers in their own right, to play a key role in that.

There will be a role for Government and that might be more co-ordination because this is largely a Scottish Government competence when it comes to Skills Development Scotland and others, and it starts at an earlier age in terms of the future profile of the workforce than the apprenticeship stage. We would expect, and there is certainly evidence this is beginning to happen, the Scottish Government to use public resources to model training in the right direction for the future workforce and also to use



their co-ordinating and other capacities to ensure that the delivery gets to the place where it needs to. A big employer responsibility, but certainly a role for the public sector, too.

Q160 **Sally-Ann Hart:** Going on from there—I think you briefly touched on it—where do you think specifically that support should be targeted?

Dave Moxham: Sorry, are we talking about Scottish Government support?

Sally-Ann Hart: Whatever support is needed, whether it is from the UK Government, Scottish Government or the private sector. Where should the support be specifically targeted to?

Dave Moxham: From my point of view, a great deal needs to go, in the Scottish instance, to further education, ensuring that further education courses are fit for purpose. That can often, with the right strategies in place, go some way to meeting that “place” thing that I spoke about earlier. We have for instance, there is the Grangemouth refinery in Falkirk. We have a new college in Falkirk. We have undoubtedly, although the pattern is not yet predictable, a major transition that is going to take place there. Our further education courses and partnerships need to be able to look forward to where some of those big changes are going to take place and make sure that we have the courses in place. A well-funded further education sector with good, strategic leadership is absolutely vital and one that I would particularly pick out.

Sally-Ann Hart: Thank you. Mr MacGregor, do you have anything to add to that?

Bob MacGregor: I do. You can target sectors that you know are going to be using these skills for the renewables, but you need support for the apprenticeships to make sure that the apprenticeships that people are getting are fit for purpose. I am thinking especially of the electrical apprenticeships, because a lot of the future technology that we are going to use—electric charging points for cars and all that—is about generating electricity. I can see an increase definitely in the electrical market and there need to be good-quality apprenticeships for people to go through, and then to get jobs at the end of it and have the skill sets to deal with the future technologies.

Q161 **Sally-Ann Hart:** Thank you. Mr MacGregor, perhaps you can take on the next question first. Clearly some work is being done about support for retraining and reskilling, whether it is in the finances or in education, but is it enough and does more need to be done?

Bob MacGregor: It depends on the size of the market. That is still quite an unknown. That will depend on the investment that is put into the new green technologies and how big that market is going to be for the UK. We hope it is huge—we do—because as Dave said earlier we can be a net exporter of energy because we are on an island surrounded by water. We have tides that we can take advantage of. It could be huge, but it



HOUSE OF COMMONS

depends on the investment and how quickly that investment comes. If we do not get investment quickly to get these projects up and running, the training does not need to be there if the jobs are not going to be there at the end of it.

Sally-Ann Hart: Chicken and egg. Mr Moxham?

Dave Moxham: Bob has covered what I wanted to cover there.

If you take it to the other end, R&D is the other enormous area for us, so again talking about these emerging technologies—hydrogen and other technologies. Carbon capture is not quite emerging; it emerged then sank and now is re-emerging. We really have a major opportunity and I cannot underline this enough, to make use of our geography and first-mover advantage in this area. I know I am spraying public money around— that is my job; I am a trade unionist—but the R&D side should not be missed in any report that comes out of this Committee.

Q162 **Deidre Brock:** Hello, Mr Moxham and Mr MacGregor. I am glad you could come along to give evidence. I have been very much enjoying what you have been saying so far. What involvement have either of you or your organisations had with the UK Government's Green Jobs Taskforce? Are you able to fill us in on that?

Dave Moxham: My involvement is limited, in the sense that we are aware of its existence, its membership and its remit, and we have had meetings with our sister organisation, the TUC, who have my counterpart Paul Nowak, Deputy General Secretary of the TUC, and Sue Ferns from Prospect sitting on that—two very good people to have on that. We are glad that they are represented. As you would expect, given the shared competencies in terms of energy, they have done what we would expect them to do and they have been in early discussions with us and the Welsh and the Northern Irish TUC with respect to facilitating our input into that group. We do not have a direct involvement and you may think that is a good or a bad idea, but certainly the TUC has acted to ensure that its representations to that body will reflect our views too.

Q163 **Deidre Brock:** I see. Are you saying that there is no representative from any of the devolved Administrations or parliamentary Assemblies on the board?

Dave Moxham: I am not aware. I could not swear to the fact that there is no devolved governmental representation, although I must say, having looked down the list a couple of months ago, that I cannot remember having seen one. Do not hold me to that, but I guess it would be a reasonable question, if the question you are putting is should there be adequate direct representation of people who have the shared competencies, particularly when it comes to renewables in that sector, and if it is the case that there is not, my answer is there should be, but that is a little bit caveated because I cannot quite recall.

Q164 **Deidre Brock:** In terms of the sorts of information you are feeding into



your TUC colleague, what is the feedback you are getting?

Dave Moxham: As it affects UK-driven policy on renewables, we have a very shared position with our sister organisation the TUC, whether we are talking about the operation of contracts for difference or the national grid. On most of these things I would not have any particular fears that there would be a particular distinction in policy. There are areas of divergence between the Scottish and UK Governments, and it will not come as an enormous surprise to you if I say that where there are those differences, we have tended to be closer to the Scottish Government. We certainly want to be alive to anything in terms of the outputs of that group that we felt were specifically detrimental to Scotland, but I must say that just now the major inputs that I have seen—plans from the TUC with respect to that—we would generally be in agreement with, because they are talking more about the areas that we would converge with them in policy terms.

Q165 **Deidre Brock:** Okay, but you do not feel that Scotland is at a disadvantage, for example, or any of the devolved authorities are disadvantaged through not having a direct voice on that body?

Dave Moxham: I hesitate to say that. I am slightly at a disadvantage because I do not know for sure whether the Scottish Government are represented. I think it would be a mistake if at some policy or representative level there was not a specific representative of a Government that have devolved competency with respect to renewables.

Bob MacGregor: I am not aware of any engagement that Unite has had, other than through the STUC, because we are obviously members of the STUC and we feed into that conversation. I am not aware of anything directly with Unite.

Q166 **Deidre Brock:** How confident do you feel that that taskforce will deliver the sorts of results that the UK Government have planned for it? How do you feel things are progressing?

Dave Moxham: To be honest, I have not spent a lot of time following the progress of it. We have our hands full enough with Covid and all the jobs and renewables in Scotland just now. I honestly would say that I do not know how they are getting on. I am going to keep returning to this ambition point. I think it lacks ambition with respect to the challenges that we face. If you ask me about some Scottish Government initiatives, I would probably answer similarly, but again for me the issue is ambition and overall levels of funding, which I think are significantly less than are required.

Q167 **Deidre Brock:** I was going to ask you about the Scottish Government's National Transition Training Fund, and what your thoughts were on the remit of that—whether it was wide enough—and if you do not think it is, how you think it might be improved or expanded. Mr MacGregor maybe first.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Bob MacGregor: To be honest, I have not looked at how that is targeted, so I will defer to Dave on this one.

Dave Moxham: Similar to a lot of my answers, I think that they have accurately identified the broad areas in which training will be required. I think it would be useful to bolt in a guarantee—getting certainty into that. If you are going to provide the funding, let us double down on that and say that nobody who is transitioning from one sector to another should go without that guarantee. I think that would provide certainty to the delivery. There is not a high level of Government trust among the Scottish workforce in terms of transition and after transition, and I genuinely think that bolting that in would be useful.

I would be interested to see how long the funding lasts. Part of that is clearly about demand. It is difficult to quibble with a figure until you have seen action in other areas, which would boost demand for the use of the fund. Previous funds have been useful. They have been utilised by Bob's members, and just as the pandemic hit, in late March 2020, we were pushing very hard for the continuation of previous transition funds because they were being used proactively by workers, including in offshore wind. It is a good thing; bolt in a guarantee and be aware that the funding that has been given will not necessarily be sufficient if we are successful in the way that we want to be successful, which is a bit more about demand.

Q168 **Deidre Brock:** Lastly, I think this question is for you, Mr Moxham, but please chip in, Mr MacGregor, if you feel like it. It was about the STUC's proposed Climate Skills Scotland, which I guess probably includes that guarantee that you are talking about, which needs to be bolted on, and the new role that you would see that public body playing in the future.

Dave Moxham: The body would obviously contain—whether it is a rebranding or not—a number of the agencies that you would expect already to be involved in skills provision. One of the sectors of government that is too little mentioned in terms of just transition are local authorities. Local authorities have an enormous role to play. I am not saying that local authorities are not at the table already in terms of skills transition, but it is about ensuring that directly elected local authorities, enterprise agencies, the skills bodies and—you will not be surprised to hear us say—trade unions from the bottom up are involved. Sometimes I like the word “partnership” and sometimes I do not, but I will use partnership on this occasion: it is being involved in a partnership approach that is absolutely badged as delivering and does not see any distinction between delivering on climate skills and delivering on skills for industry. It is a way of superimposing just transition over a whole swathe of our skills policy. It is going to be the economy for the period ahead and that is the way we need to think about it.

Q169 **Deidre Brock:** Are you talking about a standalone public body—a new one that encompasses all those different aspects?



Dave Moxham: We would be prepared to negotiate, to be quite honest, about exactly the final form. I guess we would not be arrogant enough to know, or state, exactly what it should look like, but it would have an increased level of co-ordination. It would have an increased level of funding. It would have direct local elected representation on it and, in our view, it should be answerable to a very senior member of the Scottish Cabinet, who would have the responsibility for ensuring that it was a Scotland-wide strategy.

Deidre Brock: Interesting. Thank you. Mr MacGregor, is there anything you want to add to that? No? Okay, great. Thanks very much.

Q170 **Andrew Bowie:** Good afternoon, gentlemen. Thanks very much for giving up your time this afternoon. I represent an Aberdeenshire seat, so the transition from oil and gas to renewables is at the forefront of a lot of my constituents' minds right now, with many of them being if not directly then indirectly affected by the change that is happening off the north-east coast. I was heartened when Mr Moxham suggested that oil and gas would be the predominant industry in terms of recruiting people, at least for the next decade or so, because the perception, and the reality, is that the oil and gas industry is an ageing industry with an ageing workforce. While it is encouraging that many of the people already in that industry are keen to transition into jobs in renewables, are we as a Government—or is the industry, because the success of Aberdeen and the north-east of Scotland is very much built on private enterprise rather than Government investment—doing enough to recruit new talent into the existing energy sector therefore to be ready to move into these new jobs? A lot of this ageing workforce, from my perspective, will be retiring when it comes to the period when we are going to be making that big leap into investing wholly into renewables.

Dave Moxham: I could not answer in detail about how it is going for the sector in terms of recruitment, but I can say, and you may have heard this yourself, that there are some concerns over recruitment and that is for unsurprising reasons. Oil and gas is not necessarily a sector that people have been encouraged to see either as a good job—it may be good in pay terms, but not good in terms of relative moral judgment, for want of a better description—and clearly not necessarily a job for life, because no one thinks that we are going to sustain the same levels of employment through the 2030s and the 2040s that we are now. We have heard of some difficulties.

There are a couple of issues here. Although you had previous evidence about Scottish renewables, and the generalised view that people are open to the transition to renewables, the awareness among the existing workforce of the opportunities and things like the concept of just transition is very low. We do not have any particular evidence to suggest that is particularly the case for the future cohort either, so who is going to universities and colleges at the moment and laying out a path that sees geologists—the high-level geologists—working in offshore oil and gas for the next 10 or 15 years, but then working in carbon capture?



HOUSE OF COMMONS

What about people who will frankly be doing quite similar work, but are able to see themselves on a rig and also able to see themselves in a maintenance role for offshore wind?

I am not sure that people are seeing that trajectory just now and I think there is a responsibility on companies both in terms of their existing workforce, and also their future workforce, to present that far better. I do not feel—a bit of this is feeling as well as knowledge—that people necessarily see those two outlets for their skills as being connected just now, and that is a major problem, if that is the case.

Andrew Bowie: I agree. Mr MacGregor, do you have anything to add on that?

Bob MacGregor: No.

Q171 **Andrew Bowie:** Okay, thanks. That is brief and to the point.

Does the UK Government's transition deal—the £16 billion transition deal working with the existing oil and gas sector, much celebrated and vaunted—do enough to promote a just transition? Is there enough in that to assist companies, and to encourage them to retrain, reskill and move into this space, or is it still very much focused on extending the life of the existing fields and rigs and all the rest of it, which is something that we were talking about two or three years ago?

Dave Moxham: There is some emphasis on extending life and as a policy position the STUC broadly supports that. There is something there I think in terms of indicating trajectory for companies in terms of moving into hydrogen, carbon capture and other areas, which is important for us. We would like to see a harder emphasis on fair work. I guess this is one of those areas where we are talking about wanting to make sure that the Scottish Government do have, in our view, a stronger commitment to fair work and a recognition through the supply chain. We would like to see their influence extended. Our view, frankly, about that deal is that we are all on fairly the same page as industry and the Scottish Government with respect to wanting to maximise the expectations of companies in terms of fair work and job security. We are not sure that BEIS was necessarily the most helpful in terms of driving through that expectation. We would like to see more expectation that Government funding, Government support and strategic support would see conditionality for companies in terms of secure employment and skills. The £16 billion sounds like a lot of money, but it does not sound like enough money to us, to be quite frank.

Andrew Bowie: Mr MacGregor, do you have anything there to add?

Bob MacGregor: It is no surprise to hear Dave saying it is not enough because we all think that. As Dave said, the important thing that the Government can do here when they are giving this money out is to have conditionality on it. Use the levers that you have to make sure that these jobs that are being created mean that the transition to the renewables sector is a fair one. You have levers that you can utilise to make sure that



if you give money to a company, it gets spent in the right place and that it creates, and is focused on creating, UK jobs and income for UK families. We do not believe that has happened in the past and it needs to happen in the future.

Q172 **Andrew Bowie:** I do not disagree in principle, but is there not a risk that in placing too much conditionality or conditions on private companies, you dissuade investment and companies choose to invest elsewhere, meaning that we will not reap the benefits that the oil and gas and subsea sectors reaped in the 1960s and 1970s in the north-east?

Bob MacGregor: I do not think so. Companies want to make money and they will make money off the back of this renewables sector, so I do not think that the Scottish Government putting conditionality on it would put companies off investing their own money, because they know they are going to make money. That is the bottom line and that is what they are there to do.

Dave Moxham: If I could add to that, I am sure you will have seen with the various CfD rounds—this is specifically on offshore wind again—the kinds of reductions in strike price. We are looking at some of these major developments, at least in part, going ahead without any form of subsidy at all. You will have seen the potential estimates of gigawatt output. I think we would have to work very hard to destroy that market. I think there are lots of strategic questions about the supply chain, speed, and things that Government can do to make it most effective. I certainly expect that you will hear from the private sector that the speed of bringing these projects from conception to delivery is something that could be dealt with. I am not saying there is nothing that affects incentives. I generally do not think that the market for offshore wind is going away and I therefore think that Government are in a good position, particularly if they take elements in other parts of the supply chain. At the end of the day I do not always think that private sector companies are big, bad, nasty organisations. I think they probably would quite like to use a highly skilled local supply chain if they possibly could. I do not think they ever take any particular pleasure from shipping construction projects halfway around the world. There are definitely things that Government could do, but I do not believe, and this is a genuine belief, that the expectation of decent employment standards is the problem. To labour this point a little bit, our competitors in some of these sectors are not just low cost, low employment quality. A lot of them are high unit cost facilities in Spain and areas of northern Europe, so we are not hopefully in this automatic race to the bottom situation.

Andrew Bowie: I completely understand.

Q173 **Jon Cruddas:** Good afternoon, everyone. Can I go into a bit more detail about these supply chain issues that have been kicked around a bit? The 2019 offshore wind sector deal committed to I think a 60% lifetime UK supply chain content by 2030, yet the most recent supply chain plan guidance for auction round 3 in 2019 does not specifically mention UK-



based supply chains. More generally the STUC has identified what you call a defeatist approach that suggests we cannot secure adequate supply chains, which reflects the weak industrial strategies pursued by both the UK and the Scottish Governments, and that Scotland, "has failed to capture any significant volumes of the supply chain for wind energy", instead it being sourced from abroad." I think Unite has also argued in their submission, and Bob has already touched on this, that in effect taxpayers are subsidising foreign companies and that Scottish companies are being denied contracts to manufacture within Scotland. My basic question is: how likely is it that the UK will hit the 60% lifetime UK supply chain content and if not, why not, and what would be the implications of this target not being met? Bob, can you reply first?

Bob MacGregor: Yes, sure, Jon. There is no way, with the way things are going at the minute, that that target will be met. There is no chance. They were meant to create 130,000 jobs by 2020. They have created about 6% of that at best. The job creation that was predicted just has not come to fruition, and that is solely because the contracts have been shipped out around the world. As I said earlier, UK taxpayers are paying for that. I have no embarrassment about saying that the strategy is wrong. The strategy is not working. It is not delivering the jobs that it should have delivered and something needs to be done about that. Something needs to be done to make sure that the UK supply chain benefits, and grows and thrives, to make sure that we have a green economy, for one thing, and also that it is very difficult for people in other countries to build our infrastructure. It needs to be built here and the public purse benefits from that because everybody pays taxes on their wages, and it should be direct employment so the guarantees are there for these taxes being paid, people not dodging their taxes by working in limited companies that they are not limited companies, and umbrella companies and all that. That just bleeds money out of the public purse. It is not going to deliver, I do not believe, the jobs that it should and unless something is done urgently to address that, it never will deliver what it needs to deliver in terms of jobs.

Q174 **Jon Cruddas:** Has the train left the station and we are never going to be able to deliver the 60% content?

Bob MacGregor: I do not believe so.

Q175 **Jon Cruddas:** Dave, can I put that on to you as well?

Dave Moxham: If you take away the phase of project delivery that starts with construction and ends with installation, and therefore you are simply looking in majority terms at development, maintenance and then some logistics, you cannot hit that target. The only way you can hit it is by employing enough spin doctors and accountants to try to tell the story in a different way. You certainly could not hit it in any reasonable way. It seems to us that that is just the simple case. I know that you had evidence from EDF last week and you will be aware that I think there are around 300 jobs currently at BiFab, which is about 15% of the overall



jacket construction element, so it is pretty easy to do the figures and look at how many people that would employ if we had the capacity.

You mentioned there that we have said there is a culture of defeatism. It is not fair necessarily, much as I like being unfair to multinationals, to blame the multinationals in all areas of this. Let us be honest: there is no way that EDF could have delivered all of those 52 jackets with the current infrastructure in Scotland. This is not just a question of how contracts for difference operates, and I should say at this point we believe that the CfD should do two things. No. 1: be specific about the construction phase so that as well as overall targets, it has construction-phase targets. We also believe that the UK Government should stick fairly firm in their current consultation on this matter, particularly if industry tries to push them away from this to the increase in essentially the accountability and penalties if they do not hit it. There is definitely something that CfD could do and should do about that.

The other end of that story, and you touched on this, is the capacity to produce. We are seeing some heartening news in terms of core upgrade but I probably will not need to tell anybody the story of the poor management at BiFab and the lack of infrastructure that placed it in the situation where it was in a very difficult competitive position. One half of this is the Government mechanisms; the other half is the developmental industrial strategy required for the supply chain.

I talked earlier about the supply chain with respect to security for workers. The ongoing supply chain—the rolling programme of work—is really important for Government investment, too. One of the big problems that BiFab ran into was it was unable to show a pipeline of production. If you cannot show a pipeline of production in terms of sequential projects, it is more difficult to deal with some of what were EU and now are international trade rules in terms of Government investment. You have to get that going. Somebody mentioned chicken and egg earlier. The three areas from our point of view are Government investment, rolling a programme of supply and Government mechanisms that ensure companies stick to their 60%, particularly at the construction phase.

Q176 Jon Cruddas: I think you have just answered my next question, which was going to be, given all of the above, what steps are required to push for greater UK and Scottish content in the renewables supply chain. My question now is slightly different. Is there anything else that you could add that could be involved in a more systematic approach?

Dave Moxham: Yes, I would certainly add in there that ScotWind drowned itself in the Crown Estate process. I forget which incarnation of the BiFab disaster we were in at the time but it was certainly with the previous Cabinet Secretary for Finance that we discussed the potential amendment of the Crown Estate rules that govern the ScotWind leasing contract, which does not allow for hard, absolute conditionality. In particular it looks at the lifetime of a project, which means that



companies granted the permission would have responsibility from the start to the end point, so all the way from concept through to decommissioning for projects. This provides additional soft, if not hard, levers for the Scottish Government to ensure that local content is maximised, because it looks to a longer term, more holistic responsibility on the developer to deliver. We should not forget the ScotWind round, and I know there is a bit of concern from the private sector about the length of delivery from the start of the ScotWind round all the way to the delivery of the CfD, and we would be all for making that process as efficient as possible. There are levers all along the way here, and I would add CfD to ScotWind leasing as a potential lever.

Q177 **Jon Cruddas:** That is really useful. Bob, is there anything else you want to add in terms of any further steps required to make sure we can try to get back to the 60% supply chain?

Bob MacGregor: It just needs some focus, in my opinion. The Scottish Government need to focus on what work is going to be in the pipeline for the next 10, 15, 30 or 50 years, and how we deliver that in Scotland so that we will benefit from it. Dave is right; you have levers at your disposal to make sure that you are delivering for Scotland as best you can. The CfD is a Westminster Government process, but it should be adjusted as well to make sure that it delivers on what the country needs, not what big business needs.

Jon Cruddas: Right, so it is a question of political will. Thanks for that, guys.

Q178 **Mhairi Black:** Thanks to the witnesses for giving us so much of their time. Following on from a couple of points that Jon made, one of the things that we heard at the previous evidence session that was really interesting was that back in the 1980s the UK was very comparable with Denmark in wind programmes, and while Denmark continued to invest and commit to these projects, the UK did not. As a result of that we are now basically living through the consequences of those decisions. I think Danish offshore wind generated more money than the whole of the UK arms industry in 2016. In that sense, is it too late for Scotland to obtain a meaningful share of the onshore and offshore wind supply chain? I will open that up to whoever wants to answer first.

Dave Moxham: Thanks for the question. I guess it depends which renewable source we are talking about and which component part of that process. The CfD, for instance, has been opened up again to onshore, but we do not currently have the productive capacity to meet that. I would probably see a bit more of an onshore boost. I guess that on whether we capture that in Scotland, particularly given what you were saying about the Danish share of that, without being highly qualified to say this, I would be sceptical about it.

I think we have probably talked about offshore wind. I still think it is there and possible. There are other aspects of that we have not talked



about—subsea construction and other areas that are still open to us there. I would not say we have completely missed the boat but we are sort of missing the boat. We have seen some green shoots around this. I do think that port development—we have recently seen the Port Leith proposals—could make a difference, because it helps if you have a port that is tooled up to do what you need to do. Port development can help.

I would not say the ship has sailed, but in different areas, we are running quite close to the cliff. I think there is probably more opportunity in floating offshore for us. That is still an area where we can get both some first mover advantage and if we get our act together now, there are opportunities.

I do not know if your question went this far, but when I am talking about first mover advantage in things like carbon capture and hydrogen, I am thinking back to the 1980s and about how the Danes were, frankly, prepared to take that risk. They stuck a lot of eggs in that basket and it worked for them. We recognise that these are not necessarily proven technologies at scale and there is still a question about demand, with some big questions to be answered about hydrogen use, the decarbonisation of heat and the rest of it. I am not suggesting that it is an easy area, but I would much rather stick a decent amount of public money in that basket and take the risk that we are not going to get there than to find ourselves in a situation 30 or 40 years on of having missed another opportunity when Scotland's geography and its workforce are still so potentially well suited to those technologies at scale.

Mhairi Black: Thank you. that is helpful. Bob, do you want to add anything to that?

Bob MacGregor: I will reflect on what Dave said. The boat has not sailed yet, I do not think, and I think we need to run to catch up. It is still possible, but it needs investment—strong investment—to get there and we just need to focus on how that journey needs to take place and what is required to get us to that point. I think it is definitely still doable.

Q179 **Mhairi Black:** Thank you. That rings true to everything we have heard so far in evidence because one of the other things that has stuck with me from the last evidence session was when I asked in layman terms if the full potential of renewables in the likes of Orkney, Shetland and the Western Isles was to be realised and invested in, what could that energy power, and the answer was about 50% of the UK's total energy needs. To me it seems so obvious that we should be doing something right now, and we are not. Is that the kind of thing that is preventing this just transition or are there other areas of opportunity for Scotland in the renewables supply chain as opposed to what I have just mentioned there?

Dave Moxham: I think I have probably covered most of the opportunities in the renewables supply chain—development, construction and maintenance. I did not know that figure that you talked about, but it



is not counterintuitive in terms of what could happen in the period ahead. There is some doubt about the size of future electricity needs, which is partly about how the heat network ends up being decarbonised, and whether that is an alternative gas or an electricity solution. I know this is not where your inquiry lies, but we are only talking about 25% of the decarbonisation sector here, and do not get me started on the retrofitting of housing and the potential investment in public transport, both of which have double-plus goods in terms of the fuel and travel poverty that people find themselves in, and the fact that both of those sectors are significantly worse than the energy sector for hitting decarbonisation targets in Scotland. I do not know if you meant that far, but I could do another whole evidence session on the need for similar investments in public activity in those other emission sectors.

Mhairi Black: That is fine; you have just given me my next pitch for an inquiry. Thanks very much. That is all from me, Chair.

Q180 **Chair:** There have been quite a few references to contracts for difference, so here is your chance. What do we make of where we are with contracts for difference? Is it a help or a hindrance to the development of renewable technologies and jobs?

Dave Moxham: It is definitely a help. We have seen an expansion; I am not sure we would have seen that otherwise. Our general view on how any subsidy mechanism should be funded is through general taxation rather than levied on consumers. Dundee has the highest levels of fuel poverty in Europe and we are not particularly keen on seeing people there essentially funding these things through their fuel bills when they are certainly not seeing the benefit, but as a general model I think it has been effective. We have already rehearsed through previous questions the improvements that we would like to see in the current consultation and the next round. It is likely to be a diminishing lever, because the higher the level of subsidy, the higher the level of potential conditionality that we can impose. Whether it endures as the unit price for offshore wind reduces is a question, and what Government would and should seek to do if it becomes a weakening lever when there will still be, in our view, an enormous imperative to promote quick expansion in offshore oil and wind backed by good supply chain jobs is, I guess, something we may come back to in policy terms. It has been effective in expansion; it just has not necessarily been effective in delivering the volume of jobs that we would like to see in certain areas. I guess you have heard enough from me on that particular point over the last hour and a half.

Q181 **Chair:** We will never hear enough from you, Mr Moxham, when it comes to these issues. What is your view, Mr MacGregor? Does contracts for difference help to raise standards and protect workers' rights?

Bob MacGregor: I believe it has helped to move offshore wind production forward, but I do not think it has delivered on jobs for Scotland or the UK. It is a national scandal how these things are being produced and the lack of benefit to the public purse that has been



HOUSE OF COMMONS

created. They will be standing off our shores and we will be staring at them for the rest of our days. Yes, it has moved the green ticket forward a bit, but it has not moved the jobs market forward. It has stalled in that regard since 2014.

Q182 Chair: We are looking at contracts for difference and I will direct this towards you, Mr Moxham. Is there anything we can do with it in its current condition and shape that would help achieve some more of its objectives? I am thinking mainly around your interests in workers' rights, improving employment and benefiting skills?

Dave Moxham: There are two points I would repeat for emphasis, but I will add one. There is obviously breaking it down into different phases of development and construction, just to reiterate the point that it is partly that we cannot hit the 60% without it, but it is also very much around place—the idea that you are talking about the most centralised grouping of workers, and that tends to be good for workers and it tends to be good for communities. Holding firm, because we were fairly heartened by the additional conditionality—the sticks—that was introduced in the consultation paper from the UK Government. The other one we will always say is standards as well, so you do not really have job standards. Again, 60% of quality jobs is probably too much of a moveable feast to us. If we thought we had a Government that would be open to this, we would say trade union membership; at the very least, the Scottish Government's strong direction that worker involvement, worker consultation and proper workforce mechanisms should be part of it. With all due deference to some members of this Committee, I am not holding my breath for the UK Government to say that we should reintroduce the closed shop for production, but as an aside there is definitely something about quality of jobs that could be in there and that would be incredibly helpful in terms of the just transition, because not all jobs are equal.

Q183 Chair: One of the initiatives that the UK Government have now is the Build Back Better plan for growth. Do you have any views about that and if it could help achieve some pipelines of projects in Scotland?

Dave Moxham: You cannot spend some money and not have some positive results, but if we look at the investment in the UK and across Europe in comparison with Joe Biden in the States—I think that would be the best example—you are looking at massively different amounts of money. To be frank, a lot of the announcements of the last 18 months have even been inflated by reannouncements of figures that had already been committed pre-Covid. Again, I think it is genuinely hard for an awful lot of people to listen to figures in the billions and work out what that means in terms of quantum and quality of recovery, but it simply is not enough.

I guess what I would reflect upon is that if you read the argumentation for these kinds of projects and Government investment, they make all the right noises in terms of what the effect of that investment is. There has been a little bit of a rediscovery, albeit probably temporary, of some form



of Keynesianism over the past 18 months, so they employ Keynesian arguments and then they do not do the logic of that, which is to spend 10 times as much, and I really mean 10 times as much. If you look at the different scale between what they are doing per capita in the US and what they are doing per capita in the UK and a large part of Europe, that gives you the sort of scale of the lack of ambition of that project.

Chair: I knew we would not get through a session with our trade union colleagues without a reference to Keynesian economics.

Dave Moxham: It is like if you took me up to the pub and you bought me a pint: I would be grateful, but I would be looking for more.

Q184 **Chair:** I think that is a useful analogy. What about you, Mr MacGregor, on Build Back Better? Is there anything that you have noticed or detected and found useful for your Unite the Union members?

Bob MacGregor: Yes, I think Build Back Better is an ambition. I do not know if you have read the document. We put a link in our written response to the Unite Plan for Green, the seven shovel-ready projects, but there is no need for us to come out of this pandemic and for there to be mass unemployment, in our belief. There are shovel-ready projects there as Dave touched on earlier: retrofitting houses with greener technologies, insulation and carbon capture—they are massive projects that are ready to go. Automotive and shipping will all eventually go to green propulsion, so for us, given our Navy fleet, we need to prepare for it. We need to put the infrastructure in place so that our work can be done in Scotland and the rest of the UK.

A lot of workplaces have closed over the last couple of years—some massive workplaces—and there is a need for a gigafactory to supply all the batteries that we are going to need for the future transport technology that is being developed. There is loads of potential there to create employment and to put the infrastructure in place that we are going to need as a country to grab the jobs that do come, and grab the manufacturing jobs. I still believe that the backbone of this country is manufacturing. We need to make stuff to drive the economy and we need to do that in a way that develops green technologies hand in hand with that.

There is plenty of opportunity, but we need to grab it now and we need a strategy to grab that opportunity. You have the Michelin Scotland Innovation Parc. That was a tragic time for Dundee, losing the 800 jobs but there is something positive that has come out of that. That innovation parc has not created many jobs to be fair, though I hope that it will in the near future, but that received investment from the Scottish Government because of what it is doing, and the fact that it is looking for future technologies and research and development—all of that stuff—to prepare us in getting infrastructure into our country that we need. I think that Government support of that kind of project and using their money in that way is definitely the right thing to do.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Chair: Thank you both ever so much. That is the end of our questions, unless any of my colleagues have any last ones that they want to put, but they are saying no.

That was a fascinating session, as always, and we thank you for coming along. If there is anything else you feel that you could usefully contribute to this inquiry, we would be delighted to hear from you. For today, once again, thank you for coming along and helping us out with this inquiry.