



Environmental Audit Committee

Oral evidence: An Environmental Scorecard, HC 215

Wednesday 16 Jul 2014

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Written evidence from witnesses:

- [Defra](#)
- [Wildlife and Countryside Link](#)

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Members present: Joan Walley (Chair), Peter Aldous, Neil Carmichael, Martin Caton, Zac Goldsmith, Mike Kane, Mark Lazarowicz, Caroline Lucas, Caroline Nokes, Dr Matthew Offord, Mrs Caroline Spelman, Dr Alan Whitehead, Simon Wright.

Questions 47–111

Witness[es]: **Dan Rogerson** MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for water, forestry, rural affairs and resources management, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, **Shirley Trundle**, Director, Sustainable Land Management and Livestock Farming, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, and **Jerome Glass**, Deputy Director of Strategy, Department of Energy and Climate Change, gave evidence.

Q47 Chair: Minister, let me welcome you back after a very short time away from giving evidence to our Committee, and say to you and your officials—to whom we are also grateful for your time here this afternoon—that we feel that this is an important inquiry that we are doing in order to try to give some kind of focus to the time between now and 2015, when many minds will be focused on environmental policies of one kind or another, so we want to have some kind of a baseline understanding of Government policy. It might be helpful if I say that we aim to finish the session just before 4.00 pm at the latest and also that we want to try to be focused with the questions that we have this afternoon. I shall try to cut people short if you are not.

If I can start by saying that the Government has said that its aim is that this will be the first generation to pass on the environment to the next generation in a better state than they inherited. The evidence that we have, particularly some of the work that the National Audit Office has done for us, suggests that there is a mismatch between this aim and the resources provided to meet it. What does the Government intend to do to close this gap and address this mismatch?

Dan Rogerson: Sure. Would you like us to introduce our brief to you?

Chair: By all means, yes.

Dan Rogerson: Thank you very much. It is a whole two weeks since I was here.

Chair: Still there, congratulations.

Dan Rogerson: Just so I wasn't suffering from a lack of scrutiny I was at EFRA last week as well, so I have had a great run in to the end of this part of the parliamentary year, but if I could get my colleagues to introduce themselves.

Shirley Trundle: I am Shirley Trundle, Director of Sustainable Land Management and Livestock Farming at DEFRA.

Jerome Glass: I am Jerome Glass. I am the Deputy Director for Strategy at the Department of Energy and Climate Change.

Q48 Chair: Right. I think in a way the thrust of our inquiry is to look not just at the specific actions that DEFRA carries out but to look at the cross-cutting aspects and the relation of that across all Government policy. No disrespect, but we would have liked to have had the previous Secretary of State before us to answer some of these questions, and clearly the events of the last 48 hours mean that we hope to have the new Secretary of State looking on this entire cross-cutting, collaborative, embedded agenda of sustainable development, but that said, we will get back to my original question.

Dan Rogerson: While I am happy to come back as often as you would like me to, obviously I am more than happy that my ministerial colleagues also come to talk to you about some of these issues. So, if I set out some of the ambition—

Chair: I think it was the mismatch that we wanted. We can get on to that, but it is the mismatch: resources and policy.

Dan Rogerson: All right. First of all, in terms of bringing forward the first White Paper on the natural environment for 20 years, that set out a number of things that we were going to do—and are doing—to protect and enhance the natural environment. We have completed 75% of the 92 actions that were set out in the White Paper. If you want some more specifics on that, obviously I can supply that in writing about where we have made that progress, but perhaps I can give some examples. You said, quite rightly, that we are talking about generations here. For obvious reasons it is a big challenge and it means that it is something that you do not do on a short-term basis. You have to put things in place and work on those.

The environmental goals are long-term; they cannot be achieved overnight and they cannot all be achieved by Government working on our own. So this morning I was with the National Forestry Stakeholders Forum and we were talking about what is being delivered across the range of stakeholders there on what we are doing with forestry. We want to promote an integrated landscape scale approach through nature improvement areas and the catchment-based approach—I anticipate we may talk more about water quality later—incorporating the value of nature into decision making with improved Treasury Green Book guidance and national natural capital accounts; working with business to look

after nature and their bottom lines at the same time as with the Ecosystem Markets Task Force; and setting up the LNPs—local nature partnerships—introducing a new local green space designation to help communities protect their environment.

It does take time for these things to feed through, but we have in hand the creation of over 60,000 hectares of priority habitats, including wetlands and woodlands. Over 95% of our sites are of special scientific interest—SSSIs—with favourable or recovering status, which is 1 million hectares or 8% of England’s area; 62% of priority habitats are in favourable or recovering status, which is up from 54%, and by the end of the Parliament over 1 million new trees will have been planted. We have—

Q49 Chair: Sure. I think what—

Dan Rogerson: I am just giving you some of the things that we are going to do.

Chair: —we want to try to do in this session is focus on the mismatches. I think one of the concerns was if you look, for example, at the Natural Capital Committee’s 24 March report, that stated that we are not on a trajectory to meet the Government’s long-term vision as set out in the natural environment White Paper, and the Wildlife and Countryside Link conducted a review with a checklist where the Government had I think nine red alerts and I think there were just four that were on green. This is not in any way disputing the good work that is being done—

Dan Rogerson: Sure.

Chair: What we want to try to focus on is: what is the difference between the vision, the objectives, and the actual reality, and where that mismatch is, and it would be helpful to have an honest understanding. You do not always have the means or the resources or the capacity to do everything, so where is the mismatch? We can then concentrate on closing those gaps and that is what we would like from DEFRA.

Dan Rogerson: Yes. I suppose you might expect me not to say that there is necessarily a huge mismatch between our intentions and what we are doing on the ground, and you are clearly going to question me more closely on particular areas of work. We can explore some of those, but I think it is very much our contention—coming back to what I was saying earlier—that if we are serious about doing this, and we are as a Government, it is going to take everybody. So that is working with business and local authorities and all the actors out there, local nature partnerships getting established and finding their feet and their role, and the work they have done with LEPs—local enterprise partnerships—on local growth to make sure that the value of natural capital and improving and protecting that natural environment and biodiversity is in plans for the future. Civil society has a massive role to play here, quite rightly, in terms of watching over us, guiding us and giving that input and all the huge amount of volunteering hours that goes into helping us deliver the improvements that we want to see as well.

So, again, coming back to this morning, the engagement with those in forestry shows a good example of how we were not in a place where everybody felt we were going in the right direction but we have moved forward with the independent panel’s views on where we should be going within forestry and the very ambitious things that we have set out there, which are now being delivered in partnership with all those organisations.

But perhaps you want to question me on some particular aspects more closely.

Q50 Chair: Yes, the detail. If we look at it from a different angle, the National Audit Office report, which has been done and which we are very pleased to have from the NAO, comments on progress in 10 environmental areas. I wonder whether or not the Government perhaps has had a chance to set out which of those 10 areas it is most concerned about and wants to step up its efforts to actually achieve greater success in those areas.

Dan Rogerson: To be honest, I do not think we would want to sit back and say that we were de-prioritising any areas. We need to make progress on all of them. You have quite rightly set out the resource challenges for us by all departments across Government and all the agencies that we work with, whether it be the areas that I directly have responsibility for within the department to do with the Water Framework Directive, where we want to make progress on water quality; or whether it be on the work that we are doing in moving to create more of the MCZs in the marine environment—we have done the first tranche and we have the other two that we are working towards bringing in. So there is a lot more work to be done and we always anticipate that people want us to move more quickly and to press forward on them, but I would not like to say that we are stepping back in any of the areas that we have to deal with.

Q51 Chair: Perhaps I can try another angle then. If you were going to give a rating perhaps out of 10, where 10 is very good and 1 is not very good at all, what rating would you give today and what would you give a rating to back to 2010?

Dan Rogerson: I appreciate the approach you want to move to is a scorecard, and we have colleagues here joining me from DECC who will talk about where we are on meeting our targets on carbon. That is a very easy thing to measure. I would be very interested to see the work that you have come up with here on a scorecard but, as you have already mentioned, there are a number of other organisations that come up with their own scorecards and measure against them. So I think our priority is to move forward on these issues. For me to pick out now marks out of 10 would be very much a finger in the air exercise. I do not think that would be a helpful approach. These are long-term issues.

Q52 Chair: I can think about my work, whatever it is, perhaps in the constituency role. I think there are things that really need to be done. There are things at different times that need special attention focused on them. Is there anything where you think, “We have to be keeping a look on this. We have to be keeping a firm watch on this.”? Do you have any areas of concern that you are really concentrating on?

Dan Rogerson: You rightly set out that there are a number of levers that do not sit directly with DEFRA but are there across Government. For example, if we look at air quality, which is highly topical and very important to us, the work that our colleagues at the Department for Transport are doing to support ultra-low-emission vehicles and what we are doing across the Government would be an example of how we are investing heavily in moving things forward and moving away. I could talk about the Water Framework Directive and what we are doing across that. There is a whole range.

Chair: Okay. We will move on. Thank you.

Q53 Peter Aldous: I would like to home in on the work that the RSPB and the Wildlife Trusts have done. I think one of the conclusions they reach is they would like Government to introduce more stringent environmental protection measures. A couple of examples of the things they are looking at: they are saying that you should be looking to increase an increase in species Watchlist Indicators by 2040, and also by 2040 at least 80% of SSSIs should be in a favourable condition. What do you think of their proposals? Are you enthused by them and going to take them on board?

Dan Rogerson: We will certainly take them on board and, understandably, with organisations such as the RSPB with all its huge membership, we share their aspirations for moving forward. I have set out the fact that we are going in the right direction. We may not be going as fast as they would like us to do. We hope that with the progress we are going to make with the reforms that are coming out on offshore policy, as we bring that in that we will make further strides to where we would like to be.

Shirley Trundle: I chair the Biodiversity Programme Board that those organisations are members of. We are doing a lot of work at the moment to look at where we are at present, to look at the targets that were set in the Biodiversity 2020 Strategy and its progress, and then to work out what trajectory we would need to be on to achieve those targets—what contributions we expect, for example, from the new rural development programme. So we are doing that work. I would not want to endorse specific figures at this stage, but that is something we have very much in mind, understanding what the trajectory needs to be and working towards those targets that were set for 2020.

Q54 Peter Aldous: Taking it a bit further, what do you make of their suggestions on targets? I detect a slight note of reticence about those. Is that correct?

Shirley Trundle: I think we have the targets. Talking specifically about biodiversity, there are some targets in there. Those are ones that we are still aiming towards achieving, so—

Q55 Peter Aldous: Are those targets helpful?

Shirley Trundle: I think they do focus the mind, yes, so they can have a value. I think the danger with targets can be that if you fix them a very long way ahead that they then become a bit totemic and do not allow you to take account of how wider circumstances might be changing.

Q56 Peter Aldous: I take it from that you feel that perhaps some of their targets—looking at 2040—might be a little bit too far ahead. Is that right?

Shirley Trundle: I think it is very, very difficult to look out that far but I am not dismissing the idea.

Q57 Peter Aldous: But you will look at their proposals in a bit more detail?

Shirley Trundle: Yes.

Q58 Peter Aldous: Is there any public reporting mechanism at the moment to monitor the progress that has been made against those targets we already have for improving environmental protection?

Dan Rogerson: Anything that we have targets on we would report against. They are publicly set so we would be reporting on those. As we have heard from Madam Chairman, there are a number of cases where other organisations are setting targets and scoring us against that, which we welcome as part of the discussion and debate when they come in and talk to us and we sit around the table and look at those. I think the point I was making earlier on about comparing this to our main targets around decarbonisation, it is very easy to measure and some of these other things are a little bit more subjective and also because, by its very nature, they are interconnected; they are across the environment. If you pick out a few targets and focus on those at the expense of everything else, then you could find yourself not achieving the overall benefits that you want to achieve.

Q59 Peter Aldous: If I wanted to find out how you were doing against the targets you have, how would I do that? Is it easy for me to find out and measure performance? Is that a transparent process?

Dan Rogerson: Against? Specifically, you would have to define which targets but we do report on them.

Shirley Trundle: Yes. Very recently there has been a report published on progress against the Sustainable Development Indicators, so that is one example of something that has come out very recently into the public domain.

Jerome Glass: With respect to the carbon targets, we publish an annual statement of emissions. The Committee on Climate Change publishes an annual progress report, which in fact was published yesterday, and we report against that. So in carbon terms it is quite easy to find those figures.

Q60 Peter Aldous: Moving on generally, the RSPB have put forward a proposal for a Nature and Wellbeing Act. What is your take on that?

Dan Rogerson: In terms of the lifetime of the Coalition Government, obviously, it would not be on the Ministers' programme now but I understand the aspiration behind that of getting things on a more statutory footing. In terms of parties moving into manifestos, I am sure it is quite an interesting proposition, with three or four parties who want to engage with that, but because it is harder to measure I think that is the issue. There is a whole range of targets. We could come down to a few narrow ones, which would mean that we are not making progress against the totality as we would want to do. I think we would have to have a very long and involved debate about what the right measures would be, and that is part of what you are trying to do here so it is part of the process.

Q61 Peter Aldous: Finally, Minister, are there any aspects or elements of their proposed Act that you would not support?

Dan Rogerson: We would have to have further discussions with them about the details of their proposals. They have not come in and sat round the table and talked about those.

Q62 Peter Aldous: There is nothing that makes you recoil in horror in what they are proposing?

Dan Rogerson: I am always cautious, especially when we hear about targets. It would be one of the key things, what those might look like. Having said that, the approach to the

White Paper of making sure that we are accounting far more for the natural capital we have—all objectives—it would be logical to explore how you might legislate to do that. That is obviously not something that the Coalition Government is doing in the time we have here in office, but I think it is a very useful discussion we can have in the coming months and years.

Q63 Mrs Spelman: One question off the back of that. The point you made is that there are things within the Natural Environment White Paper, being a White Paper, that require legislation. At this stage of the Government, particularly, the Cabinet Office will be looking to the departments for what legislation they would bring in to a future Queen's Speech. That stage of the timetable. Given that nature and wellbeing—the wellbeing particularly—is a cross-cutting subject, have you had any discussions with the Cabinet Office about what needs to be enacted to bring forward into legislation the wellbeing agenda?

Dan Rogerson: We do look at implementation across the piece. That is why we were able to give the statistic I was giving earlier about how much of what the White Paper set out as aspiration is being delivered. I have not recently had those discussions with anyone in the Cabinet Office but I suppose that—

Q64 Chair: Would the Secretary of State have had discussions with the Cabinet?

Dan Rogerson: The Secretary of State has regular discussions with the Cabinet Office. I would have to check what the previous Secretary of State had covered in those discussions, yes, but it is not information I have to hand, I am afraid, as to whether—

Q65 Mrs Spelman: If I could come back to that, because one of the features of the proposed Nature and Wellbeing Act, which also has the support of the Wildlife Trusts, is at one level a deregulatory piece of legislation where they look to consolidate.

Dan Rogerson: Yes.

Q66 Mrs Spelman: Surely that is something that is attractive to the Government. In other areas of governance it has shown an interest in doing that and—

Dan Rogerson: It did.

Mrs Spelman: —DEFRA has identified examples of where legislation could be improved by consolidation.

Dan Rogerson: I think that is true. That is work that we regard as part of our continuing process of trying to simplify the regulation, which is not to say in any sense to weaken the legislation but to bring it together in a way that is more accessible, not just from the point of view of the ease of administering it but also from those people who day-to-day in their lives will have to deliver it and live by it. We are doing all sorts of work that does not take legislation to do, and we have made progress on that. We had a big event over here in the House of Commons, where the agencies from the DEFRA family were setting out the work that we are doing on making that a lot more accessible for land managers and for people who are involved in it. Then also, at a European level, where we are very much involved with our colleagues from the Netherlands on how the environmental legislation works and what we can do to, again, not weaken the safeguards but simplify it so that it

works better from the point of view of environmental protection as well as people using this stuff day-to-day.

Q67 Zac Goldsmith: What do you think would be the pros and cons of setting up an independent body to assess, monitor, report and advise on environmental sustainability, something like the Office for Budget Responsibility? On balance, is that something you would support?

Dan Rogerson: It is not a proposal that we have directly considered. The premise that we started this discussion with is we are not making progress fast enough and, therefore, someone to hold us to account would be helpful. I would like to think that we are making progress. We have the bodies here in the House that hold us to account, as we have this august body that looks across environmental legislation across all the Government departments as well. More directly, in our department we have the EFRA Select Committee as well that looks at it, and with the number of pieces of work that we do on adaptation to climate change, we had the subcommittee there publishing a report. There are a number of bodies out there. It is something we could consider but I do not think I would see it as necessarily something that is going to create a huge leap forward in what we are doing.

Q68 Zac Goldsmith: The Natural Capital Committee's remit ends in 2015. Would you see any merit in extending it beyond that and perhaps tweaking the terms of reference so that it was able to fulfil the role you have just described?

Dan Rogerson: That is certainly something we could consider. First of all, it is responding to the work that they have already done. So it is getting out a response, which we hope to do very soon, to their most recent piece of work that they have done. Yes, that is something we could consider but it would not be—

Q69 Zac Goldsmith: Is there a discussion going on in DEFRA about the future of the Natural Capital Committee? What is the likelihood of it ending in 2015?

Dan Rogerson: There are discussions of course. As of yesterday, the situation in DEFRA means there will be an awful lot of discussions about many of these issues over the coming months and that will be something I am sure that will be on the agenda to talk about.

Shirley Trundle: We have made a commitment to review the committee later this year, so that is something that the Government will be coming back to and considering what should happen next.

Q70 Zac Goldsmith: When are we likely to know whether or not the Government is close to making a decision on whether or not to extend it or end it?

Dan Rogerson: I suppose there isn't a deadline for that, but the Government has not many months to do that, so I would hope that we would have a signal of what their intention would be as soon as possible.

Q71 Mark Lazarowicz: One of the policy levers available for environmental protection is regulation. Do you think that overall we have too little or too much environmental regulation?

Dan Rogerson: I do not think we are in the position of having too much regulation, but I think sometimes it is how we bring those regulations together so that they operate in a better way, and quite a lot of that will be at the European level where the Directorates General have pieces of work that they conduct, and it is trying to encourage them to integrate that as much as possible. From the point of view of ease of use for people who are working in that natural environment and want to do what is right and what they are legally obliged to do, but also what they may aspire to do to improve things, and in terms of the money that we have as a Government to invest, the more that we can achieve multiple improvements with a pot of money the better. That is why, if we are looking at the catchment-based approach, when it comes to water there are a number of different benefits there, which could be achieved by working with land managers and landowners with one particular scheme. So I think that is the way we want to do it. It is not so much that we are overregulated, I think it is about making sure that those regulations make sense and that they work together and interact in as beneficial a way as possible.

Q72 Mark Lazarowicz: I asked the question because sometimes I hear people suggesting that there is too much green regulation and this is the sort of thing that impedes business but also is not effective. I take it from what you say that that is not a view with which you would concur?

Dan Rogerson: No. But I accept the challenge that we can always do better in making that more user friendly and that the interactions between the different regulations could be more coherent. So that is what I think we have to focus our efforts on.

Q73 Zac Goldsmith: How does the Government's Red Tape Challenge contribute to the need for more effective regulation? What has it done to achieve that?

Dan Rogerson: First of all, going over the statute book for all the bits of regulation that are now surplus to requirements—they have been superseded by something else or circumstances have moved on—and taking those away, or in some cases merging or winding up bodies that exist, to bring them together. The previous Secretary of State set out on a number of occasions his aspiration for the various inspections that have to go on on farms, for example—bringing those together so that they happen in a co-ordinated way rather than separately one by one. I think that is something that we still want to work towards. It is also about not just the regulations but it is about how you interact with them. So if you are starting to do something new, you do not have the experience of what regulation you are subject to. How do you find out what the risks are, what you need to know? So what we put online, making that far more accessible—what Natural England do, for example, so that you can find out more easily, if you are looking to do something in the natural environment, what you have to be aware of and what conditions you have to meet to do that in a very user friendly way, and we are making progress on doing that.

Q74 Mark Lazarowicz: It is not so much simplifying or slashing regulations as such, but more a question of making them more accessible, easier to understand for those affected by them? Is that the main thing?

Dan Rogerson: It is also about getting rid of regulation that now does not serve a purpose, which has been particularly superseded by more recent legislation, but also where we can bring pieces of regulation together so that they work in a better and more simplified way. It is a fair challenge constantly to Government to have an eye on that and to be doing it,

but in terms of what we are seeking to achieve in improving environmental quality, protecting biodiversity and all the other outcomes that we want to see, then regulation clearly has a very important role to play. You need carrot and stick to be able to achieve those outcomes.

Q75 Mark Lazarowicz: A lot of the environmental protection regulation we have obviously comes from Europe. Should the balance between UK and EU environmental protection change in your view? Obviously I have in mind the balance of competences review. Do you think that is something where there needs to be a major change in the balance between the UK and EU responsibility?

Dan Rogerson: Some of the issues we face will transcend borders. For example, if we look at air quality, particulate matter and various other pollutants that we receive here come from the continent and when the wind is going the other way we send it over there. So we need to work together on these issues for improvement. In other cases there will be things that we will do that will be very local or England-based in impact, so I think it is horses for courses. But I do think that we can encourage our colleagues in Europe to go through the same exercise that we have been going through domestically on bringing that regulation together and looking at what is fit for purpose and what is not. I mentioned the particular work we have been doing with our colleagues in the Netherlands who are very much of the same mind.

Q76 Mark Lazarowicz: Are there any competencies that you have identified as ones that should be repatriated, brought back from Europe? Have they indicated there is a need for European co-operation or anything you have identified that should be changed?

Dan Rogerson: I do not think I would be able to identify anything here that I have highlighted in my work as something I would like to change.

Q77 Mark Lazarowicz: Wildlife Link highlighted their view that EU regulation has been—I will find the exact phrase—overwhelmingly beneficial. I do not want to misquote them, “The EU has had an overwhelmingly positive effect on the UK’s environmental policy. Membership of the EU has required the UK Government to put in place a range of legally-binding policies with strict targets which are regularly assessed”. Would you disagree with that assessment?

Dan Rogerson: As a Coalition Government there is a determined policy of talking to the European Union about where we think there has been mission creep and there are things up for renegotiation. But with regard to environmental protection, I think you are quite right to point out that a number of the discussions at the European level have been beneficial, but of course the United Kingdom have been part of that and we have pushed for those improvements as well. Speaking as a Liberal Democrat member of the Coalition Government, I am certainly not ashamed to say that I think those discussions at a European level are sensible ones to have and have been very beneficial and helpful, particularly because some of those problems we deal with are cross-border ones anyway, so you cannot resolve them domestically.

Q78 Mark Lazarowicz: Are you in a position to tell us how the UK balance of competences work on the environment has had a—well, what response has there been to that from EU and Brussels so far?

Dan Rogerson: That is probably something I would ask if we could furnish you with some evidence on afterwards. It is not something I have to hand here to share with you.

Chair: Two colleagues want to come back on the points we have just covered.

Q79 Caroline Lucas: I want to come back to the Red Tape Challenge, so called, because you will know that for many people concerned about the environment that rings alarm bells. You were just talking about the fact that there are areas where regulation is out of date or duplicated and so on. If you were looking at the environmental sphere in particular, can you give some examples of where that is the case?

Dan Rogerson: It would be around sorts of things where we would have had some form of domestic protection in place prior to the implementation of broader European things like the Water Framework Directive and so on where we have gone through them. I do not have those examples to hand but I have seen lists of things. There have been an awful lot elsewhere in DEFRA with regard to some of the animal health things where things have moved on and some of these—

Q80 Caroline Lucas: With the Water Framework Directive, wouldn't that clearly take precedence over any existing domestic legislation?

Dan Rogerson: That does not mean that things are not on the statute book. That is why I am saying. I am trying to think of an example, but if there is anything that no longer serves a purpose then we would want to sweep that away, and that is what we have been seeking to do. A lot of the stuff about the Red Tape Challenge has been more along the lines of what I was saying, when the event here at the House of Commons was an opportunity to show that, and we had farmers and NGOs and others there to talk about how to make what we have work better for people so that it is less resource intensive for everybody who has to deal with it, but that does not lessen the environmental protection that it delivers because otherwise we are not going to make progress on the sorts of things we are talking about today.

Q81 Caroline Lucas: The reason I was pursuing it is because unfortunately the whole sort of language of the Red Tape Challenge implies that regulation is always a burden, and you add that to the Deregulation Bill and you have this whole momentum behind taking away regulation. I would be very worried if your department were inadvertently reinforcing that as a frame through which to see this happening.

Dan Rogerson: Regulations deserve to be challenged. I think that is a healthy approach to have, in the same way that you are here challenging me. I think it is right that we challenge regulation to make sure it is necessary but also that it is delivering what it set out to do that it is not delivering some sort of perverse incentive or holding back progress elsewhere. So I think it is right that we go through a constant process of checking it. That does not mean a watering down of the approach that we want to see, both for the environmental purposes but also because, as we are part of the European Union, we will be held accountable as well. So we need to make sure from the point of view of the taxpayer that we are not going to be leading to infractions of this. We want to make progress, for the environmental good but also because we have made a commitment to do that, and we are signed up to doing it. Those regulations are an important tool towards doing that. But they are not the only thing. Equally important is engaging with everybody

to make it an aspiration that people want to be part of and that they want to make progress on as well. That is the sort of approach—whether it is local nature partnerships or a catchment-based approach—looking at that local scale where people can see the benefits of what they are doing and there are local economic benefits as well as environmental benefits for doing that.

Q82 Caroline Lucas: Would you accept, though, that there are places where this has gone too far? I am thinking of things like the change to the code 6 building regulations in terms of the amount of environmental protection, the amount of energy efficiency and so forth we are expecting from our homes in the future.

Dan Rogerson: I am going to defer to my colleague at CLG about what the aspirations are for making progress on far more efficient—

Q83 Caroline Lucas: But seriously, a moment ago we were talking about the importance of being joined up and it seems to me that while you are obviously technically correct that that is a part of the CLG's remit, if your department were not having a very strong say on what was happening to something like the watering down of those codes, which is being done in the name of "Get rid of red tape. Let's have more growth," and so forth then I would be very worried. So I want to get a sense of whether or not your understanding—

Dan Rogerson: In terms of wanting to be far more energy efficient and to minimise emissions there is a role for DECC in that too. We do have to work across DECC—

Caroline Lucas: But I—sorry, Chair.

Chair: No, go on.

Dan Rogerson: Is that a problem or not is that what you are saying?

Q84 Caroline Lucas: Can you point to something you have done to say, "We have lobbied to try to stop CLG watering down this particular regulation because in this particular aspect we understand the regulation is playing a good role," even though we all accept the fact that in some places regulation is—

Dan Rogerson: That kind of sets it up as a constant battle between departments. I think there is a—

Caroline Lucas: I am rather hoping it is because otherwise you are rolling over and CLG is just—

Dan Rogerson: No, I think there is a more collaborative approach to doing some of these things. For example, on the flood protection I deal with, in terms of the message that is strong about not building on flood plains, that goes out quite clearly and obviously we work with our colleagues in CLG about where housing is brought forward. There are a number of areas where we work closely together to make improvements.

Jerome Glass: On the carbon side specifically at official level there is a cross-Government body of the National Emissions Target Board that this Committee has had some opinions on in the past, where there are these sorts of debates going on. I am not able to point to a specific thing where things have been resolved in quite that sort of way, but there are fertile discussions going on about policy plans and sharing of best practice and so on.

Q85 Zac Goldsmith: You mentioned to Mark earlier that Britain has had a positive impact in terms of lifting the bar environmentally in Europe in relation to various—

Dan Rogerson: I am saying there are some indications.

Zac Goldsmith: The reason I ask you that is I cannot think of a single example of that and a lot of evidence we have had in pretty much all the inquiries that we have done—the most recent one being pollinators in particular, in relation to neonicotinoids—the message we have had is the opposite. It is Britain has been lobbying for standards to be lowered and not raised. I wonder if you could give us any good examples at all of where we have had the effect of improving, increasing, enhancing environmental regulation at the European Union level.

Dan Rogerson: What I would say is that the work we are doing on trying to encourage the Directorates General to simplify and bring together what they are doing, I think would deliver better outcomes if we make it easier for people to comply with, not because we are lowering the bar but because we are making it easier for people to understand and we can bring those things together—

Zac Goldsmith: No, I get that. We understand that.

Dan Rogerson: Those are the things that we are taking a lead on. So in terms of what that bar is—if that is your question there—obviously a lot of this legislation long predates my time in Government, so we would have to go back and look at all the discussions there.

In terms of where we are at the moment and what the position of this current Government is, you picked on a particular example there. The position of DEFRA: they wanted to use the scientific advice and base their approach on those negotiations. As I say it predates my time. I haven't sat around the table so I wasn't privy to those discussions.

Q86 Zac Goldsmith: On every example that I come across—for example, yesterday I am told France changed its position in relation to bottom trawling. That will have a negative economic impact on them, but despite that, they have changed their position on bottom trawling and are supporting something approaching a ban, and yet this country, with only two or three vessels that actually do bottom trawling off the coast of Scotland, seems to be doing everything it can to prevent that ban. I can spend all afternoon giving examples. I understand what you are talking about in relation to the approach, that joined up approach, and I agree with that but I just wonder whether there are any specific examples of a particular piece of environmental policy where we have strengthened it rather than weakened it, or at least we are trying to.

Dan Rogerson: As I say, across the ministerial team I would have to look at all those negotiations. I am obviously very pleased that we are at that table having those discussions, so that is another matter.

Q87 Caroline Lucas: What I want to ask about is the great deals initiatives. The Government has announced these and I want to ask how many of the 39 schemes will have a predominantly environmental focus do you think?

Dan Rogerson: That is a very big question. I am afraid it is not an evaluation I have done, although what I would say is that, because of the local link or nature partnerships the dimension of looking at the natural environment has been part of that process. It is trying

to bring together a vision for a local community and then applying for some money and some capital to deliver, or some freedoms to deliver, which is the other approach to it. It is not just about the money that is provided. Where in the past they may well have been applying for a particular transport scheme through DfT and others, it is trying to unify those things. So I think it has provided an opportunity. Last week I went to meet with council leaders at the SEMLEP, which is the Northamptonshire, Milton Keynes and Bedfordshire LEP. As part of the discussions there I went on to meet the chair of the local nature partnership who felt that his colleagues had been able to be part of that discussion. You can look at some of the bids that have gone in that focus on public transport: it is not all about roads; it is about investment in other infrastructure as well, alternatives to roads, which I think is a good recognition of that. There has been more money that has been bid for for water management and flood protection, which has environmental and land management benefits as part of that as well. So I think there are aspects of those plans where the environmental element has been integrated into it. Whether I could say that that one is wholly about improving the natural environment and that is their top priority, I suppose we would have to look at that.

Q88 Caroline Lucas: Yes, there are 180 road schemes so we are not lacking in roads, but if you cannot take—

Dan Rogerson: Yes. When it comes to air quality in some cases where the problem is they are all sat there arguing. There are very local air quality issues—I accept the broader point and we won't talk about carbon emissions, and so on, but there are some issues where improving road junctions and things can make a difference to local air quality. In the meantime, while we are moving towards a far less than fleeting way of moving around.

Q89 Caroline Lucas: Sure. If we cannot be sure how many have a predominantly environmental focus, can you say anything more about the way in which some kind of screening is done to make sure that they are not going to have a negative impact? What I do not quite understand is the process. We have these £39 million worth of projects. Do they come past your desk to give some kind of approval? How does that work?

Dan Rogerson: For them to come past my desk one by one and for me to delve into them would be—

Caroline Lucas: Or your department.

Dan Rogerson: Certainly our department is very much involved in those and also agencies of the department, because again there is interaction between the idea that, if we are going to have growth, agencies like Natural England or for that matter English Heritage would be seen as a block on it. That is very much not the approach. The offer we have made to all the DEFRA agencies and organisations is that they can be available to be talked to very early on in the process, so that we can look for, yes, the growth that we want to see but that we integrate these other questions in at the beginning. I am not going to say that that process has been perfect in every one of those areas, but I do think it is a different way of doing things and it does allow you, because it is a bottom-up process, the opportunity to challenge or to set out a vision for where you want to get to.

If we are looking at people wanting to invest in renewable energy, and making that a focus for what they want to do, there are areas around the Humber where that has been a key

consideration of what they want to do. That has been key for them, whether it is, as I say, looking at managing water in the environment with the point of view of flood protection and not just doing that in terms of hard schemes but doing that in terms of softer land-management schemes as well.

Q90 Caroline Lucas: Could you give any examples of where your department significantly either changed or stopped an element of these growth plans going ahead because it was deemed that the impact would be too negative?

Dan Rogerson: No. I think for us to be sat in there with a kind of vetoing approach would get us back to the older way of doing things. In terms of setting up LNPs, right, and their ability and they have been a challenge. Going round talking to chairs of LNPs—and my colleague Lord de Mauley has been doing some of that as well—some feel that they have been able to get into the LEPs area and been taken more seriously and worked with them, and that is what we want to build on, but I think it is far more powerful if happens at the local level, so it is integrated at the very beginning into what the vision is for the local community—

Q91 Caroline Lucas: I suppose what I am trying to get at is that—

Dan Rogerson: —and I am not saying, “No, you are not doing that.”

Caroline Lucas: Sure, but what I am worried about is that usually when an economic argument comes up against an environmental one, sadly the economic one normally trumps it.

Dan Rogerson: Yes.

Caroline Lucas: What I am trying to get at is whether your involvement in the process of developing these deals means that there are any examples where we can point to the fact that that outcome has been averted through whatever measures you might have collectively come up with?

Dan Rogerson: I guess I have not been to that zero-sum game type of process of, “That one is good and that one is bad.” What I want to concentrate more on and what we want to look for are opportunities for making that development work for the natural environment. The example I saw in Bedfordshire was very much about that. They were bringing forward proposals as towns and settlements grow and they have development where they look for opportunities, not just to safeguard what is there but to improve the quality of the environment as part of those bids. A lot of the local growth bids will be around making sure that land is able to be developed for jobs but also for housing and so on, and it is how we go about doing that rather than just sticking up a pile of houses and not thinking about what the consequences are for the environment. It is how we integrate that work into what happens with development. I want to try to get away from the idea that it is either/or, that you have growth and investment or you just—

Q92 Caroline Lucas: What I am trying to understand is if there is an example to demonstrate where DEFRA has had influence on this process. That is what I am getting at, I suppose.

Dan Rogerson: Yes, well we could—

Caroline Lucas: Obviously you will say you have and, yes, things are better than they would have been otherwise because you have been involved, but I want something tangible.

Dan Rogerson: You want to see a veto.

Q93 Chair: Is there any kind of mechanism by which your input goes into it?

Dan Rogerson: As Ministers the process of where these bids have gone to, they have come to a Cabinet committee and a Cabinet subcommittee where there are DEFRA Ministers on that. I have been on one of them and ministerial colleagues have been on others. So, yes, we have the opportunity to look at those and raise question. But in the very local process clearly they engage because they want to do new things in that space, so they have to talk to the Environment Agency and Natural England about what their plans are. There is no point in bidding for money if at some point they are going to hit permitting problems or they are going to come up against things. So it is trying to get these things discussed at an early stage.

Q94 Chair: That should be when the Environment Agency have a key role in giving a green tick if you like.

Dan Rogerson: What we have been very keen to do in our discussions with Cabinet officers as they have taken this process forward and the DCLG as well, is to say, “Look, our agencies are here. Don’t come up with proposals and then start talking to our agencies about it but talk to them at an early stage, so that we do not get into the conversation, ‘We would have done it this year but we can’t because we do not have a permit.’” You talk about it before you get there and in parallel so that we can make that progress and deliver the growth that we want to see but, at the same time, improve the quality of local life.

Q95 Neil Carmichael: Can I come in on this issue about green deals and whether they are environmentally sustainable or not? Surely this is an example of bottom up rather than top down, because one would hope that any LEP would be thinking in terms of being environmentally responsible from the start in its formation of the plan. Certainly that is the case in my constituency where our award was all about effectively providing a training centre for renewable and nuclear energy, which we will all agree is very much environmentally responsible. Is that not really the essence of the question: that we need to encourage local operators, like LEPs and others, to be environmentally responsible within the general framework of the growth deal and so on?

Dan Rogerson: Yes, it is, and I think there will be a recognition among hopefully all of the Local Enterprise Partnerships that a degraded environment is not going to be great for the future of the communities that they are serving, in terms of attracting people to live and work there and to build the communities that it is all about, whether it is around the natural capital we were talking about earlier or around tourism, all these sorts of things. One of our other areas with direct involvement with the LEPs, in terms of another stream of money, is the discussions around the future of the Rural Development Programme for England and the local action groups’ process and whether we take it on and spend that money. Even some very urban ones have a rural element to them and we hold them to account for making sure that they are delivering the outcomes that we want to see, because it is common agricultural policy money and so we are held accountable by the commission for how we spend that. So that is another interaction with local enterprise partnerships

about what they are doing in their local environment and local nature partnerships and I think other local and national NGOs I have a role to play in that, and also civil society, social enterprise, we want to see LEPs take account of them and their perspectives as well.

Q96 Mike Kane: We had growth deals last week. That got a lot of members very excited about their good-news stories in their constituencies. In my patch alone, in Greater Manchester I think the Government released nearly £480 million for various schemes, and just so I can get it on the record I am delighted that—

Chair: I think you have just done that really—

Mike Kane: —Sale tram station will get a turnaround stop and Brooklyn's tram station will be rebuilt.

My question is: what first attracted the Coalition Government to releasing £6 billion worth of good-news stories nine months before a general election? I suppose my substantive question is on the £6 billion—

Dan Rogerson: Caroline had a Mrs Merton question I think.

Mike Kane: She grew up just round the corner from me, and so she is a hero of mine and I need to have her father's humour.

The question: only £39 million of the £6 billion was for environmental schemes; is that good enough?

Dan Rogerson: With all projects round development that money coming in allows you to do something where you will be taking an area forward to deliver jobs or housing, and then it is about how you implement that; whether you take the opportunity as that development, because that is money being spent to do things that will help improve environmental quality as part of that. So it is getting way from the silo of saying, "That is environmental money and everything else we do has got nothing to do with the environment." I think we want to be far more mainstream about that, so that wherever we are developing something we take advantage to improve local environmental policy as part of it. In fact, if we want people to come and work in areas then that environmental policy is crucial, because if you are making things worse, making it grotty and making it less attractive, you are not going to attract inward investment from companies and people because the quality of life there will be pretty poor. So all of these, whether they be transport-focused schemes or whatever will have an environmental or air-quality angle to them, as I mentioned earlier on, which is another issue.

Q97 Mike Kane: But I challenge you to say, "Wouldn't it be great if we could spend as much money as we do on local enterprise partnerships as we do on local nature partnerships?"

Dan Rogerson: It would be great to have lots more money to spend on all sorts of things, but to draw such a hard distinction between "This money is only for growth and that money is only for the environment."? I think we have to look at opportunities to bring the two things together.

Q98 Mrs Spelman: This is the bit that you know is coming and, as the dentist would say, “It might hurt a bit,” but you will have been prepared for the areas where the National Audit Office briefing singles out some things that perhaps are not going so well. I want to ask some questions on three areas. The first of these is the October 2013 assessment against biodiversity 2020 indicators show that there has been deterioration in over a quarter of these. What is the Government’s plan to improve this situation?

Jerome Glass: With particular species and—

Dan Rogerson: Yes, that is an issue. I set out how we are making some progress on improving priority habitats, although I accept that people would want that progress to be quicker. I do not know, Shirley, if you want to add something on particular species where that has been raised that has been raised as a problem.

Shirley Trundle: I think one of the key tools for us going forward is going to be the way that we design the new environmental land management scheme that is going to provide a very significant sum of money. We will have over £3 billion to spend over the next period, so it is going to be critical that we design that in a way to maximise outcomes. I think we have learnt quite a lot from the previous schemes—stewardship and so on—and we will be working very closely with Natural England and with various NGOs, the NFU and so on, to work out how we design a scheme that will deliver the maximum benefits across the piece. I think we now know more about the sorts of environmental features that we can put in to help some of the species that are in difficulty. Lapwings have been in difficulty. I think we now know more about ways to create lapwing plots and so on, so I think we have the prospect of making better progress, going forward, using that very substantial sum of money and focusing it on things that will work and make a difference.

Q99 Mrs Spelman: But we did sign up to a United Nations agreement on biodiversity and it does hold the signatories to arresting the rate of decline in species by 2020, but as of October 2013 we are not on track, are we?

Shirley Trundle: It is certainly going to be very challenging.

Q100 Chair: Can we establish how on track are we?

Shirley Trundle: I am sorry; I would need to find the specific figures, but I think we do know that on some particular species it will be very challenging and, equally, we know that the sort of changes that we need to put in place will take time to come through and have an impact. What you have to do is create a habitat first. You do not expect to see species numbers rising straightaway. You need to get the habitat established and get the ecosystem working well, so it does take time.

Q101 Mrs Spelman: You will probably be relieved to know we did not sign up to halting the loss of species by 2020. That would have been completely undeliverable.

My second area is: you touched on this very commendable achievement of planting a million trees in the timescale, but you have set yourself the target of increasing woodland cover by between 12% and 16% by 2060 in relation to the present woodland cover of 8%. What percentage of woodland cover do your 1 million trees represent?

Dan Rogerson: The 1 million trees are not just in woodland cover. They are obviously in urban spaces as well and they are very important in the urban environment as well. I very much welcome the way that the project with which you are intimately familiar has been taken forward and the Tree Council are very much involved in delivering that. There are lots of smaller groups that are part of that as well as, creating forest, and there are many organisations, England's Community Forests and the National Forest as well, that are very good at bringing in other sources of planting towards tree planting as well as the streams that we make available through the common agricultural policy and that aspiration of the planning department of 1 million trees. So we are making progress. We have more tree cover than we have had in centuries and—

Chair: Sorry, I am finding it difficult to hear you. Could you just use the microphone so it will be better please?

Dan Rogerson: Sorry, yes, I will speak up a bit. I think it is better.

So we are making progress. We have greater tree cover than we have had for centuries and that process will continue, and partly the discussion I was having this morning with stakeholders there is about how we take that vision forward. There are a number of things there. Part of that is managing woodland better so that we get the returns from it and there is more encouragement for people to do that. Management of that woodland has benefits for biodiversity as well because we can look again at particular species, so it is a far more heterogeneous environment, with lots of different types of environments for the species that we want to see return.

The other big challenge is around tree health for us to make sure that we maintain the trees that we have as well as planting and, as I would quite rightly be reminded, when planting new trees, we need to make sure that they survive as well. So there are plans to engage people in those local communities to look after them, to understand what is best to do and so there is work being taken forward on that as well.

Q102 Mrs Spelman: So in the aggravation of declining tree health would you share the view of the National Audit Office, and the view of those who gave us evidence last week, that your target of 12% to 16% woodland cover by 2060 is not going to be enough? Do you feel there is a need to revisit that target, given the factors you have evoked there?

Dan Rogerson: I think the whole point on the targets, as we were saying earlier on, is they have to be meaningful and deliverable. You can set one that is way too far ahead in the future and I do not think that is necessarily helpful. What we have to do is work with all the stakeholders and those who are involved in the forestry and timber supply chain to see how they replace the trees that are going to be harvested over the next few years, to replace them with the sorts of habitats that we want to see. I do not think it is necessarily all just about targets; it is about what we are going to do as a society. So it is what Government does but it is also everybody else and how they engage with that.

Mrs Spelman: One last area—

Q103 Chair: Caroline, just before you move on, can I add something to that? If you could help clarify for me, I am sure that I read somewhere that there was some project whereby DEFRA had been working for a two-year period to prepare a bid that would help with the

sustainable management of woodlands and that at the very last minute that was not allowed to progress, for one reason or another. Am I right in thinking that? Wouldn't initiatives like that help with this issue of how to improve all aspects of woodlands and tree planting and so on?

Dan Rogerson: I would have to check on the specifics of that scheme. It is not something that is embedded with me. You have obviously read that somewhere so I need to look into that. You are right that there is work that we have to take forward, but one of our priorities is on tree health and research, so putting money into that to make sure that we protect what we have and also that people are not fearful of doing future planting because they think they are going to be under threat. I think if we can help people on tree health that is a big issue for us and one of the key priorities for the department.

Q104 Mrs Spelman: One last area of grilling, you will be pleased to hear, from me. That is again back to the NAO briefing, so your officials will know this is an area we would look at. Over the last 10 years there has been a decrease in the number of peat area SSSIs in favourable condition. How will you seek to improve that situation?

Dan Rogerson: There are multiple benefits to restoring peatlands. I have seen on Exmoor where they are rewetting the land and re-colonising the area with the mosses that are creating peat and how important that is. The reason initially for that project was South West Water wanting to take sediment out of the water, which is costing them money to treat further down. So we are moving towards that payment-free care-system service approach, which I think is a big win for us. There are multiple reasons for wanting to do that around habitat and so on, but water quality is a key area for us and also the retention of water for flood management purposes as well. That has obviously been very topical in recent months but there are real benefits as we continue to develop the catchment-based approach that will look right at the top of those catchments and the peatlands are a key component to that.

Shirley Trundle: I wonder if I might also mention the peatlands code—the plans that were launched in September 2013 alongside the IUCN. That is very much aimed at supporting business engagement in the process of restoring degraded peat bogs as part of their CSR commitments as well as where they have a direct economic interest. We have also commissioned some research to support this as well, and we are considering whether we might be able to help bring together a group of partners to look at accessing EU funding under the LIFE programme to do further work on peat.

Dan Rogerson: There are other indicators of making progress on that in terms of the amount of peat that is cut as well, which is falling. So that is very positive as well as the investment in recreating, which I accept is a slow and long-term process, as well as cutting down on the amount of peat that is being cut. This point about the peatlands SSSIs is that those in unfavourable but recovering conditions increased from 16% to 85%. So it is turning round that oil tanker, and while we might not be where we want to be, we have started the journey back towards where we want to be.

Q105 Chair: Can I refer back to Ms Trundle's point about the LIFE programme and ask: is there anything being done inside DEFRA to ensure full maximum take-up of the indicative amount that the UK would have under the European LIFE programme? Because I think in the past there have been real concerns that, for one reason or another, there is insufficient funding coming to the UK, which could help with many of these issues that we are talking about.

Shirley Trundle: Yes. I think it is true that in the past we have not been as successful as we might have liked to be, and perhaps collectively in the UK we have not been quite as skilful at working out what needed to be done to put together a bid that might be successful. We have been supporting work to look at how we can share good practice and help bring people together. We are looking very much now at the new LIFE programme and what are going to be the criteria that are likely to help us be successful. That is why we are particularly looking at peatland because we are going to need something quite large-scale if we are going to maximise our chances of success.

Chair: Not wanting to be upstaged by my colleague, Mike Kane, can I just say that I can think of good initiatives in Stoke-on-Trent on the LIFE programme relating to the Water Directive where we just narrowly missed out just recently. I think there is a feeling that all kinds of initiatives, right the way across the country are narrowly missing out on that LIFE+ programme, which could make a huge difference in terms of improving quality. But we had better move on.

Q106 Dr Offord: I am very pleased that we have moved on to water policies. The Minister knows that it is an interest of mine. Looking at the surface bodies of water target, which I believe Government have set themselves, instead of attaining that I understand that progress is going into reverse. Could you explain to us how you seek to achieve the target?

Dan Rogerson: We are moving towards new river basin management plans, where we will have to set out what our objectives are for river basins, and then using that catchment-based approach we have talked about where we are going with the common agricultural policy and the opportunities that gives us around land management for multiple goods, and water quality is one of those. So we want to see that integrated in what we are asking of land managers, landowners and farmers.

We are at a stage we had a big improvement, as you and I know, in coastal areas where there were issues around sewage and so on; we have done a great deal over the past few decades on that. When it comes to diffuse pollution, that is an issue. We want to have a successful and thriving farming industry, so it is about using the money that farmers get to do those environmental goods to do things on water quality as well biodiversity. They are not mutually exclusive. You can have projects that will help with both, in terms of creating buffer strips along watercourses that will keep livestock away from them. When it comes to pollution that is coming out from the soil, it is about working with farmers on how they plough the land, how they do it. I have had firsthand experience in my part of the world—if we are talking about our own constituencies—about how the Westcountry Rivers Trust, and through them other river trusts around the country, work as a sort of broker with farmers to make sure we are getting the best use of the money that goes in. Just little things they can do that will make a big difference. Farmers will be part of that local economy, so they will be integrated into what is going on with tourism and local food as well. There are real economic benefits to make the case for that better water quality that we want to see and better, healthier, more-alive water bodies around the country.

We do have a long way to go—you are absolutely right to point that out—and it will be challenging but I am optimistic that by following that catchment-based approach we can make the case for everybody working together to see that improvement.

Then there is the work that is going on already on abstraction to try to make sure that we are only abstracting from watercourses what is absolutely necessary and what the environment can support, and in the future the work that we are doing on reforming that abstraction system. That does not mean we cannot do stuff under the current regime, and we and the agency are doing stuff in the current regime. But also the progress we will make on reforming abstraction will mean that we have a more flexible approach to help continue that progress towards better water quality, as well as making sure that we have the water we need to keep that environment working well.

Dr Offord: You anticipated some of my supplementary questions so I should thank you for that.

Dan Rogerson: In my rambling answer I sort of managed to do that.

Dr Offord: It shows that you know what you are talking about. That is good.

Dan Rogerson: You will be the judge of that.

Q107 Dr Offord: Marine conservation zones, again this is another issue that I am very interested in. We realise there has not been a fast pace of implementation of marine conservation zones, so how will you speed that up?

Dan Rogerson: We have the first tranche. That has happened—and I am familiar with the Padstow Bay one in my part of the world—and now we are making progress on the second tranche and the third. So there will be those three tranches. We want to make sure that we get this right. It is important that there is the consultation and the discussion so that we do it in a way that is proportionate, right and proper, and that we do create the various habitats that we want to see around the coast. I think the fact that we are doing it represents progress, but I accept, as with all these things, we are open to the challenge that we need to keep the pressure on to move as fast as we can.

Q108 Dr Offord: What emphasis will you be pursuing for an ecologically coherent number of zones?

Dan Rogerson: Yes, I think that is the point. It is not to obsess about a particular number. It is to make sure that we achieve the outcomes that we want to do for improving the habitats at sea and seeing the recovery of the marine environment where it has become a bit degraded or where it has not been managed in the way that we would like to see. Rather than obsessing on a particular number of zones, it is making sure that we have that coherence and that we achieve the outcomes as well, and the fact that we do it as quickly as we possibly can.

Q109 Chair: I wonder whether there are any further questions from colleagues. I am very conscious that the DECC official has not had much opportunity to comment in a strategic way. Could I go back then to my original question about the way in which DEFRA is working in this cross-cutting way, and the strategic overarching way, to make sure that within each Government department the policy is not just about what the DEFRA business plan exists to do but it has this overarching theme. I wonder if finally you would like to say in the final moments your understanding of how successfully that is working.

Dan Rogerson: We have explored a number of streams and we talked about the local growth process and how DEFRA have been part of that and our agencies have been part of it. Our two departments here, DECC and DEFRA, in terms of what we are doing with energy, renewables and decarbonisation, there are lots of opportunities there for joint working over resource streams, what you could consider waste over anaerobic digestion. There is lots of partnership working, but we do have to remain vigilant and that is why when other departments are looking to change the way they do things or to look at regulation or to challenge some of that, we do make sure that we are maintaining those environmental safeguards. That is our job and I think we are doing it, but obviously I look forward to your report based on all the evidence you have had as to how you think we are doing.

Q110 Chair: On the issue of climate change, are we likely to have more pressure from the new Secretary of State for DEFRA or less in terms of looking at climate change issues, do you think?

Dan Rogerson: Obviously, while the whole Government is committed and the Coalition Government policy is very clear on both the need for action on mitigation but also on adaptation, as you and I were hearing Lord Krebs' latest bit of advice to us—

Chair: Yes, indeed.

Dan Rogerson: We maintain a focus on doing that and we work across Government to do it, and I am sure you will have the opportunity to put some questions to the new Secretary of State in due course. But certainly the Government position on that is very clear that climate change is happening, it is anthropogenic and that we need to tackle the causes and also the effects that we are undoubtedly seeing and are going to continue to see.

Q111 Chair: Presumably, it would be quite helpful to you if there was a recommendation from this Committee for the funding to match that aspiration?

Dan Rogerson: If you have the opportunity to talk to the Treasury on our behalf that is always gratefully received. We very much welcome all the effort the Treasury puts into helping us in achieving the aspirations we have.

Chair: On that note, if I can say thank you very much indeed.