

Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee

Oral evidence: Food waste in England, HC 429

Tuesday 28 February 2017

Ordered by the House of Commons to be published on 2 March 2017.

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Members present: Neil Parish (Chair); Jim Fitzpatrick; Simon Hart; Kerry McCarthy; Rebecca Pow; Angela Smith.

Questions 384 - 508

Witnesses

I: Marcus Gover, Chief Executive Officer, Waste and Resources Action Programme; Andrew Parry, Special Adviser Food and Drink, Waste and Resources Action Programme.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Marcus Gover and Andrew Parry.

Q384 Chair: Thank you, gentlemen, very much for coming to our inquiry on reducing food waste. You came to see us briefly when we started, and hopefully we are better informed now. It will be really interesting to pick your brains this afternoon. For the record, can Andrew and Marcus say name, rank and serial number, please?

Marcus Gover: I am Marcus Gover. I am the chief executive of WRAP.

Andrew Parry: I am Andrew Parry. I am a special adviser on food and drink at WRAP.

Q385 Chair: Thank you very much. My first question is fairly easy. Can you explain the role of WRAP in reducing food waste? It is a very simple question.

Marcus Gover: It is very simple and very important to us as well, particularly for household food waste. This inquiry is focused on retail and household food waste, if I understand the terms of reference. Household food waste is 7 million tonnes in the UK and, as to the value of it, people have bought £13 billion worth of food waste. It is really important.



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Around 19 million tonnes of CO₂ or CO₂ equivalent is associated with it, which is the same as a quarter of our cars on the road. It is really significant. That is why it matters so much to WRAP and why we take it as part of our mission to reduce food waste for the benefit of consumers, the economy and the environment.

Our principal approach to doing that has been through voluntary agreements. We have been running the Courtauld commitment for quite a number of years, and it has had a lot of success in reducing packaging, when we first started, and food waste more recently. That works by bringing together all the players in the chain. It is about systemic change, and the actions that one part takes will have an impact somewhere else. That is why this collaborative approach is so important. It also works with a consumer campaign, Love Food Hate Waste, which tries to put the case to consumers about why they might change, but also to help them take action. That is the role we play.

Q386 Chair: Do you think, to a degree, it has become not exactly fashionable but a case where retailers now realise that there is mileage in them reducing food waste? The public are interested in this. Do you find it is getting slightly easier with the retailers?

Marcus Gover: There are two parts to food waste: there is supply chain food waste and household food waste. Reducing supply chain food waste is good for the environment, but also very good for their business. Once we explain to them the cost of waste, they are very interested in reducing it. We have had a lot of success in doing that.

Q387 Chair: When food is totally wasted, they have to pay for it to be dumped.

Marcus Gover: That is right; it is all lost revenue.

Andrew Parry: We have definitely seen an increase in awareness among consumers of how serious an issue food waste is. You heard from Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall and his campaign. The disjoint at the moment is that people do not necessarily see that they waste food in their own home. As an issue, it is definitely in the public consciousness. It is at the top of the mind of CEOs, but we as householders need to bring that in.

Q388 Chair: It is making sure that we bring people with us and we do not lecture them too much on the subject. People do not like that, and they are always inclined to say that they are not the ones who are wasting the food. It is only when they drill down on what they do that they find they are.

Marcus Gover: That is right. Our research shows that three out of five of us think that we do not waste food, yet we know that there is a quarter of a tonne of food waste in the average bin every year in the UK. That means more than three in five of us are wasting food.



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Q389 **Jim Fitzpatrick:** I want to make the comment that there is an absolute direct parallel with driving. We all think we are good drivers and that it is others who are bad drivers. It is the same psychology and cultural approach.

Marcus Gover: Even I waste food.

Q390 **Chair:** I am not convinced, Jim, that I believe I am a good driver. I am far too fast; I know that. It is all on the public record now. You are absolutely right with what you say. It is always somebody else who causes the problem. We are never the problem, are we? How do we gently get through to people that we are all part of the problem? I am hoping this inquiry will help with that.

Q391 **Rebecca Pow:** Courtauld 2025 has a target to reduce food and drink waste in the UK by 20% by 2025. Do you think that goal is ambitious enough, because the UN sustainable development target is to halve our food waste by 2030, which is only five years after that?

Marcus Gover: You make a really important point. We have to understand the different bases that those two targets are on, which is quite technical. I am going to let Andrew explain.

Andrew Parry: The UN target does not have a baseline set, but the proposal is that countries will justify baselines. For the UK, we would suggest 2007, which was when we started our efforts to reduce food waste. From 2007 to 2015, we have had a 22% reduction when expressed equivalently to the sustainable development goal. While Courtauld 2025 has a target to 2025, as you say, that will take us to almost a 40% reduction versus the 50% for the UN target. This means we will have to deliver that additional 10% between 2025 and 2030.

Q392 **Rebecca Pow:** Did you say the UN does not have a baseline?

Andrew Parry: It has not set one.

Q393 **Rebecca Pow:** What is it judging it by?

Andrew Parry: That is the discussion the UN is having at the moment with countries around the world, to establish a bit more detail behind that target.

Marcus Gover: We understand that the UN target applies only to consumer and retail food waste, which is the same as this inquiry. The UN definition is to avoid food waste, so it is quite a specific one. If we compare like for like, that 50% target is about the same as the 47% target that we are on a trajectory towards. Courtauld and the development goal are quite similar.

Q394 **Rebecca Pow:** Does yours include all waste—consumer and retail?

Andrew Parry: Yes, it goes right from manufacturing through to households.



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Q395 **Rebecca Pow:** You think your target is ambitious enough.

Marcus Gover: It is broadly similar to the UN target.

Q396 **Rebecca Pow:** Is it ambitious enough, though?

Marcus Gover: It is quite ambitious. It is a very ambitious target, actually. It needs a step change to deliver it. If we are going to achieve that target, we all need to raise our game a lot and probably behave like the target is bigger than that.

Q397 **Chair:** From doing my arithmetic, my simple sums, we have eight years to 2025 and you are saying reduce by 20%. The sustainable development goal for reducing food waste at the UN is 50% by 2030. To me, it does not seem to be very ambitious if you have eight years to get to 20% and then you have five years to get to an extra 30% thereafter. It does not seem to me that it is quite as high a goal as the UN.

Marcus Gover: That is why you have to look at basis for the two targets. The UN target is only avoidable household and retail waste.

Q398 **Chair:** You are doing it across the whole thing.

Marcus Gover: Yes, our target in the same terms as theirs is broadly the same. It is quite ambitious. We can send you a calculation of that afterwards, if you like.

Chair: That would be quite useful. I am sure you are ambitious enough, but it is something that we would like to be proven.

Q399 **Jim Fitzpatrick:** Gentlemen, good afternoon. At the moment, the UK relies on voluntary initiatives rather than a mandatory approach. Is that the right way to do things, or should we have mandatory targets for reductions? What is your view on that?

Marcus Gover: WRAP's approach has always been through voluntary agreements. We believe collaboration is really important, and that is where you are trying to get a systematic, systemic change. As I was saying before, the action that one person or one part of the chain takes has an impact somewhere else. It is quite hard to regulate that sort of change. By collaborating and working together, we have had lots of success so far with Courtauld.

For a voluntary agreement to work, though, it is important that it is well designed and implemented. You need a clear strategic direction, leadership from those involved, clear baselines and targets. You need to measure and hold to account those who have committed to the targets. We believe that, if a voluntary agreement is done well, it is an effective way of doing it.

Q400 **Jim Fitzpatrick:** Do we have that which you are suggesting we need to have in place?



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Marcus Gover: We believe that Courtauld 2025 is that, and we have the experience of doing Courtauld 1 to 3 to bring into that.

Q401 **Jim Fitzpatrick:** Can you tell us what impact central government funding reductions have had on WRAP and your ability to play your part, which is absolutely essential to the success of the whole strategy?

Marcus Gover: That is right. Our budget from Defra has reduced. In 2013, it was around £28 million. It is currently £12 million. You can see there is a big reduction, of around 50%. Interestingly, because food waste is so important to us, the amount we spend on it has probably gone down by 20%. We have prioritised food waste within that.

The other thing is that, in the current times, we all have to do more with less. We have to play our part as effectively as we can, with as little as we can. As much as I might say I would like more money, I think our funding is correct at the current time. We can do quite a lot with it. If someone said, "Do you want more funding?" I would say, "Probably not for us, but perhaps for us to help others to take action".

Q402 **Jim Fitzpatrick:** The figures that we have been briefed on suggest that the funding in 2013-14 was £66 million and it is down to £26 million. From the Government, it is down by half. From devolved Administrations, it has dropped from £35 million to £9 million. That is 75%. Why is it even greater from the devolved Administrations? Is there a particular reason for that?

Marcus Gover: What you are seeing there is the impact of Zero Waste Scotland. Zero Waste Scotland was part of WRAP until then.

Q403 **Jim Fitzpatrick:** It separated out.

Marcus Gover: It split off, and our accounts will show that change. Zero Waste Scotland is still alive and well, and doing great things.

Q404 **Angela Smith:** Courtauld phase 3 showed that the amount of household waste has increased. Can you explain why you think it is that the Love Food Hate Waste campaign has not been as successful as you might have hoped?

Marcus Gover: Most of Courtauld was very successful. In the supply chain side of things, we achieved good results. With household food waste, we initially had very good results. We have reduced it by around 1 million tonnes. Between 2007 and now, there has been a reduction in food waste every year. Between 2012 and 2015, it has essentially plateaued. What we are seeing there is that economic times have changed, the population has increased and the number of people living in one-person and two-person households has changed. There have been factors around that have influenced it.

The people we were targeting in the early days have changed, and we now need to move on to target others. We are seeing that it is more difficult to achieve that change. Helping consumers to reduce food waste



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is a very hard thing to do. Nobody is succeeding more than we are in doing that. Recently, I have put out a call for everyone who is interested in this to unite. We all have to work together to try to make a change. We have to up our game. It is quite difficult.

Andrew Parry: To build on what Marcus has just said, it is also about looking at the needs of different types of people. None of us are the same, particularly when it comes to the types of food we buy and eat in our households. We had a very effective mainstream campaign over those first five years, but the research we have done more recently suggests that there are subgroups of people who are motivated by different things and have different needs. They might not have big freezers. They might not have much time. They might not have much in the way of skills around food. We now have a level of understanding that helps us to tailor the messages and tailor the solutions to different groups of people.

Q405 **Angela Smith:** Marcus made the point that there are more one-person households as a partial explanation of why targets have not been met. Why are one-person households in particular singled out as an explanation, in relation to the point that you have just made?

Marcus Gover: I was talking about a change in how we live. The evidence is that one-person households do not waste more food; multiple-person households probably waste more food. There has been a change in the numbers of each. I am not saying one-person households are bigger wasters of food; in fact, the evidence probably says the opposite. I am just saying that the way that we live has changed and this has an impact.

Q406 **Angela Smith:** If there has been a growth in one-person households, surely that means we would have less food waste, on the basis of what you just said. I do not want to be too simplistic.

Marcus Gover: I was talking about the overall change, rather than saying there has been a particular change here. We could give you more detail on those changes afterwards, if you wanted.

Angela Smith: It would be helpful.

Andrew Parry: We found that, on a per-person basis, if you are living on your own you waste about 40% more than the per-person average. Marcus is right: if you have a household of four people you will waste more than a household with one person, but a one-person household proportionately wastes more. That is primarily because people do not use the food up in time, so there is more food waste, partly because of the difficulty in buying the right amounts of food. A pack size for a single person is harder to find than buying larger pack sizes that are more suited to larger households.

Q407 **Angela Smith:** How will your campaign need to change that, to reach targets for 2025, given the complexities that are emerging in this



session?

Marcus Gover: That is the key question: how do we focus our activity to achieve that change? It is not just about communicating; it is about a whole range of measures. Some of the changes are technical changes that have been made to packs, to make food last longer. The shelf life from production through to being in the fridge and no longer fit to eat has changed dramatically. I am staggered by how long milk lasts these days. I drink it way before it is supposed to have run out. There have been some really good technical changes to extend the life of food. You sometimes see packs of chicken that are divided into two, so you can cut it in half and freeze half of it, or you can open one half at a time. It is kept in that carefully controlled atmosphere that makes it last as long as possible. There have been those sorts of changes.

We are also seeing helpful advice from retailers about how to keep things. I brought my daughter home from university, and there were some old bits of food that we brought back with us. There was a pack of chillies and, on the back of it, it said, "Freeze the chilli and chop it up frozen". I did that. The little things that catch you at the moment when you are about to throw it away can have a big impact, and we are seeing more of that.

In my local supermarket, I saw a huge poster at the end of the till that was telling me about how to make carrots last longer. I had just come back from holiday and there were some carrots in the fridge that had gone slightly limp. The poster said, "Put them in a glass of water and it will bring them back to life", and it did. We are seeing those sorts of things happen to help people.

Rebecca Pow: Do you not know that? My mother taught me all these things. It is the same for cucumbers.

Marcus Gover: There is something in that too, but I did not know that. Going back to the point, we all waste food. Even I waste food. There is a bit of denial there.

Andrew Parry: The question was: what is going to be done differently? Courtauld provides a fantastic mechanism, because we have all the major retailers signed up to it. That is 95% of the market share. Retailers are a very effective way of talking to consumers in-store and online. It is about working with them. We will talk about Sainsbury's in Swadlincote later. All the retailers are taking action to help their customers.

We have worked extensively with local authorities in the past, and it is about helping the local authorities to work with retailers and community groups. Marcus mentioned this rejuvenated call to unite in the fight against food waste and for everybody to take action in a joined-up way. That is what has to make the difference. It is about the scale and the effectiveness of the interventions.

Q408 **Angela Smith:** How do you do this systematically? You have mentioned



some of the ways of doing that, such as working with retailers. It is not just about telling people to put carrots in water. It has to be much more systematic and rigorous than that. You have a plan, I assume.

Marcus Gover: That is an example of the sort of thing that can have an impact, by influencing you at the point of behaviour. Our plan is around, first of all, working with the supply chain, retailers and brands to make things last longer, through innovation in packaging and making labelling clearer. We will probably want to talk specifically about labelling later, we need to make labels much clearer as to when something is best-before and when something needs to be used by. There also needs to be advice on freezing. We used to see "freeze on day of purchase", but actually you can freeze at any time. We are trying to put out that sort of guidance.

These are technical things that will help food last longer. We know that the things that make food waste are people buying too much, buying more than they are going to use and then not keeping it well enough. They then cook too much and do not use the leftovers. It is those things that we need to help people change, so we should focus on those behaviours. Buying too much is something we do in the shop, so retailers can really help us there. Through Courtauld, they are committed to doing that. In the home, there are other behaviours, which the Love Food Hate Waste campaign is all about. How to target different groups of people, so they understand why they should make the change and how to make it, is the planning that we are doing right now, to roll out for 2017 and 2018.

Andrew Parry: In the context of Love Food Hate Waste, it is worth saying that tomorrow the campaign is launching its leftover Lent initiative, which asks people to make a pledge not to bin food for 40 days. That is the kind of thing that we facilitate, but we will be working with a whole range of different partners. Before Christmas, we had the Big Freeze, so there are moments like this where we will provide materials and link in with a whole range of different partners.

Angela Smith: It is Shrove Tuesday today, isn't it? I had forgotten that completely.

Q409 **Rebecca Pow:** The statistics here say that families with children incur a loss of £700 annually for food wasted or thrown away and £12.5 billion a year across the nation is basically just wasted by people. As a Government, we keep going on about helping the just about managing. Would you not see that, if only we highlighted this message, it would help them to manage a whole lot better?

Chair: Can I come in on the back of that? Are you finding that it is like an advertising campaign? When you first make it, those who are the most receptive will react. As you get on and you get those people reacting well, the next people down the line are more difficult to engage with. Is it a combination of all these things? On the figures that Rebecca has given there, how do we get to those people who are not quite so keen or do not



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see it as being quite so much of a priority as others?

Marcus Gover: We are seeing exactly that. When we started, the big message was about saving money. There is a slice of toast with a pound sign embedded in it, which you will see around. That is about how much money you can save. That message worked for some people, but it is not working for others, even though it is £700, which is a lot of money.

Q410 **Rebecca Pow:** If you earn £14,000, and I know that that is hardly anything and probably below the breadline, that is almost £1,000 of it. What would you do for the families? Why are the families throwing food away? You would think they would be eating everything in the fridge.

Marcus Gover: That was the message we worked on, and it got the initial change. It is no longer having the impact. Awareness probably could not be higher, with programmes like Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall's and the coverage we have had recently about date labels. There is really high awareness, but the action is not coming through. That is about how we target the groups of people and what will motivate them to take action.

Q411 **Rebecca Pow:** Something that I used to hate doing, and do not do at all now, is the big shop at the end of the week. Supermarkets, in the way they are set up, encourage people to shop like that. Does the big shop, where you go with the family and have the pressure to fill up your basket to keep them going for the next week, encourage waste? I personally think it does.

Marcus Gover: There is a role to try to change that. As I said, a campaign in the store focused on helping people to not buy things they are going to waste is something we are planning.

Q412 **Rebecca Pow:** It is about planning your family meals.

Marcus Gover: It is about planning. We are planning some work to try to help with exactly what you are talking about.

Chair: There are some very good points here.

Q413 **Simon Hart:** We had the retailers in a few weeks ago and started to explore this area. We were given all the usual reassurances that they were highly concerned about the issue and that they would not engage in any practices of the sort that Rebecca mentioned, where people may be encouraged to over-buy. Really, though, where is the financial incentive for the retailers to consciously persuade people not to buy goods? I do not buy that, I was going to say. I do not believe that. Nothing I have ever heard from the retailers suggests they are really serious about stopping people from buying that extra packet of chicken, or whatever it may be, in a hurry. It is not in their interests to do so. Why would they do that?

Marcus Gover: The conversations I have had with them are about how much they value their customers and that they are trying to look after



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and keep a customer. That is not necessarily about selling them another pack of carrots. It is about how you get loyalty from the customer and give them good customer service. That is about helping them to avoid food waste. We get quite good traction with that sort of discussion, not just on food but in other areas where we work, such as clothing and electrical goods.

Q414 Simon Hart: I am guilty of this myself. It is a confession, in a way. If I go to the supermarket to buy one or two items, I always end up buying six or eight, or bigger ones than I needed, or being told, "No such thing exists any more; it is two for the price of one". I mentioned that and was immediately hosed down with criticism from the retailers: "Perish the thought that we would ever engage in that". I am a living example of somebody who buys more stuff than I need. In no single supermarket that I have ever been in has anybody ever said to me, "Do you need that? Are you sure you want that?" It is absolutely the opposite. I know you are not from the retailers, so this is a bit unfair.

Marcus Gover: As you are demonstrating, this is one of the important areas in which to work on helping people not to buy what they do not need. If you are not careful, you get into a nanny state approach to it. We have to be very careful to do this effectively. What we are working on at the moment is how we can help people to do that.

Q415 Simon Hart: I am coming to the question I was meant to have asked. There is a Sainsbury's initiative in Swadlincote. They gave evidence and we have some notes about it. It goes back to a point Rebecca Pow made about the extent to which Government should be mollicoddling the nation, trying to influence shopping habits and being potentially rather condescending about people's ability to understand domestic budgets. Is the Swadlincote project the sort of thing that retailers should do and Government should take no part in, or should Government play a role in rolling out more or bigger, better schemes?

Marcus Gover: It is great that Sainsbury's are doing that, and that is giving us lots of information about things that will and will not work. We helped them to design some of the work they are doing there, and we are also helping them to evaluate it. We are hoping to get from it a lot of learning that we can use. It is also good to see that they are planning to roll it out further, with another £1 million to fund things that people want to do. They are not imposing it on communities; they are asking communities, "What do you want to do and how can we help?" That sounds quite good.

The initial feedback from it is that some of the things they are doing seem to be working well. It will be really interesting to see how that scales up to the whole of the town. To sum up what we have achieved so far, we have had some great results working with small groups. The real challenge is trying to scale it up to a much bigger level. We are really looking forward to seeing the impact when it is scaled up to the town level.



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Q416 **Simon Hart:** Should Government be getting involved in that? Should we be putting money into it?

Marcus Gover: We should recognise what Sainsbury's are doing, and the leadership they are showing as a business by doing it. It would be great to see other businesses doing that sort of thing too. We are working with other businesses in that space.

Q417 **Simon Hart:** Connected to that is the question of whether we are making enough of new technology in the food waste disposal area. Are we in the right place on that globally? Is there an argument to say that, if we improve technology to create cheap and easy ways to get rid of surplus food, it is not quite solving the problem; it is making it easier for people to be wasteful?

Marcus Gover: We have to start by trying to prevent food waste in the first place, talking about how much it is worth and the carbon impact. That has to be the first part, and technology can really help with that, through innovation in packaging and changes to how supply chains work, so that you extend the shelf life of things. There is huge progress. I talked about how long milk lasts; I am amazed. It is innovation that has done that.

When it comes to food waste that you cannot prevent, and there is unavoidable food waste, getting the best value from it is the next most important thing. Before we get there, though, there is the redistribution of food as animal feed. When we get to the food that neither animals nor people can eat, there is a place for getting the best value out of it. All the research and work that WRAP has done has been around composting and anaerobic digestion. We have done lots of work trying to develop the markets for compost, so that farmers can use it to grow more food, and the digestate that comes from anaerobic digestion, which is a brilliant nitrogen fertiliser.

Chair: We are going to talk about some of this in a minute.

Marcus Gover: More innovation could be done there, particularly around digestate, which is a large-volume liquor at the moment and full of nitrogen. Are there ways to make that more accessible, usable and valuable? That is really important. In terms of how best to recover and recycle food waste that cannot be prevented, we would say anaerobic digestion and composting are the best ways.

Q418 **Chair:** You have called for businesses to report food surplus and waste. Why do you think this is necessary? Is there resistance to reporting food surpluses and waste from businesses?

Marcus Gover: The way we work with the voluntary agreement is that all the businesses that are part of it have to report on their progress against the targets. We collect the data. It is commercial information, so we look after it. We can then report back to them and allow them to benchmark against their peers on how they are doing. That helps them to



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take action. We report how the sector as a whole is going. That is our approach with the voluntary agreement. We do not name and shame. Tesco and Sainsbury's have voluntarily decided to report on their food waste, and we should acknowledge and welcome that they are doing that, but it is a decision for those businesses. It is not something that we demand as WRAP.

Q419 Chair: I take it that, if they manage to get food out to food banks and other situations, that technically is not food waste. Therefore, that will reduce their figures, which encourages them to do it.

Marcus Gover: Yes, that is right.

Q420 Rebecca Pow: You have called for businesses to have a food surplus and waste management plan. Would you like to explain to us what that is and how it could be enforced?

Marcus Gover: This is an idea we brought from the construction sector. We worked with construction businesses, looking at site waste management plans. At the start of the project, they said, "What is the waste going to be? How are we going to reduce it? How are we going to manage it?" That had not been done well enough before, and it was quite successful. We were thinking, "Could this be applied to food as well?" We have been thinking and looking hard at this, and we are not so sure how well it will work. For the moment, I am not planning to make that a priority for this coming year.

Q421 Rebecca Pow: Do you mean the cradle to grave idea of food, or are you only looking at it from the shop to the consumer?

Marcus Gover: On a construction site, when designing a project, they did not use to think about the waste. The change was to bring in that thinking about how much waste there would be and how they would manage it. We thought that that was a technique that could be useful here.

Q422 Rebecca Pow: it that for supermarkets and stores?

Marcus Gover: It is more for manufactures and the supply chain than the retailers. I have to say that we are less sure about how we can bring it in. It might be something not for next year, but maybe for the year after. Our first priority for bringing down food waste has to be household food waste, because there is so much of it. That is where my priority for WRAP will be next year.

Q423 Rebecca Pow: I believe Tesco is the only store that gives a register of its food waste data. Is that right?

Marcus Gover: Tesco and Sainsbury's both report it.

Q424 Rebecca Pow: They think it is slightly unfair that other stores are not doing it. What would you say to that, Mr Parry?



Andrew Parry: Marcus has partly covered this. Our role, we feel, is to get the data from the Courtauld signatories on a confidential basis. We validate it with them to make sure it is comparable. Then we will talk to any particular business and compare its food waste levels and surplus levels with an anonymised set of its peers. We work very closely to identify what the hotspots might be for that particular business, what actions it can take to reduce its waste. It really was a decision by Tesco and Sainsbury's to publish their food waste numbers themselves and, as Marcus says, we welcome that.

Marcus Gover: We recognise the leadership they are showing by doing that.

Q425 **Rebecca Pow:** This is a slightly off-the-wall comment, but do you ever think about contacting the farmers who produce the food? After all, they are producing all this food and a large proportion of it is never even going to be eaten. I have just been to an event before this, with a lot of farmers sitting around the table. They are under pressure to keep producing more with smaller margins and to use chemicals to produce it. Surely, they could usefully be brought into the conversation about the fact that some of the products they are producing are not even being eaten.

Marcus Gover: We have done some work in that space. Perhaps you want to talk about potatoes.

Andrew Parry: We had some very productive discussions last February with the NFU, the BRC, the Fresh Produce Consortium and others. It was a roundtable prompted by that very point: primary producers are in a situation where they are producing some waste, some of which is due to actions further up the supply chain. They are interested in what happens to their food, of course. We now have a working group, focusing on what actions can be taken.

Interestingly, going back to the consumer question earlier on, one of the things we have found in our recent research is that, while money is still a motivator, talking to people about where their food comes from in a really motivating way, rather than the broader, environmental impacts of food waste, is effective. For example: "This lettuce has come all the way from East Anglia. It took 400 litres of water to grow it. It has been trimmed and transported in a chilled lorry". That seems to be one of the most effective ways in which we can start reengaging with people.

Rebecca Pow: I would say that is a really motivating message. Say you are a meat eater. I say this if somebody shoots a pheasant, for example. You must eat the pheasant. Why go through that process if the poor thing does not even feed anybody at the end of the day? You are either for or against it. Do you get my point? I think that is such a strong message. Do you agree that it might start to link people back with where their food comes from?



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Q426 Jim Fitzpatrick: I want to follow up on Rebecca's question about the reporting arrangements for different supermarkets. You commend Tesco and Sainsbury's because they are out in the open and publicly giving their figures. I assume from what you said that the other retailers are supplying you their figures confidentially, which, without wanting to compromise you, begs the question: why will they not publish theirs? Are they worried about them? Are they embarrassed by them? Why do Tesco and Sainsbury's publish theirs? Have they been making better or more progress, or are there just different cultural approaches among the big five or big six?

Marcus Gover: I cannot really speak for them. We are able to hold them to account on the commitments they make as part of Courtauld and check they are fulfilling them.

Q427 Chair: Are they broadly comparable?

Marcus Gover: Do you mean the different organisations? I do not think we ought to be talking about them.

Q428 Chair: You are not going to be led down that path. You do not have to name them, but are there particular big retailers that are very poor, in your view? Is everybody roughly on the same page? Where are they?

Marcus Gover: The importance of the retailers is their influence on consumers and the supply chain. Their contribution to all the waste post-farm gate is around 2%. Most of the waste is in manufacturing and the household.

Q429 Simon Hart: Retailers' activity leads to household waste.

Marcus Gover: That is right. Their influence is the important thing.

Q430 Chair: The retailers have come in here and quite neatly said that it is all down to the consumer and the way that they deal with it in their own home. It is partly the practice of what they take into their home that increases the amount of household waste.

Marcus Gover: If they report on their waste, it is a very small amount of the total problem. Our focus is on where the big problems are, which is the household and the supply chain.

Q431 Angela Smith: Is there a significant difference, and has it been measured, between waste generated on the part of consumers who buy their food from the big supermarkets and waste generated by consumers who buy from corner shops, small stores in villages or butchers? Has that been measured at all?

Marcus Gover: I do not know if we can get that.

Andrew Parry: Generally, if you look at the survey work we do with consumers on where they might do their primary shop, there is not an obvious relationship between where people buy their food and what they



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think they waste. We have not looked specifically at people who buy most of their food at smaller, local shops compared to the larger retailers.

Q432 **Angela Smith:** I put the question badly. What I am driving at is this: if the big retailers have a role to play in encouraging reduction in food waste on the part of their customers, are they primarily responsible, or is there a role for all retailers and not just the big four or five?

Marcus Gover: All have to have a responsibility. As part of Courtauld 2025, 93.5% by volume of the retailer sector is signed up to it, which covers most of the larger ones.

Q433 **Rebecca Pow:** My question relates to this. What role can retailers play in reducing food waste by consumers? Can you think of three things that they have to do, Mr Gover?

Marcus Gover: There is a lot they can do. We have talked about the technical changes they can make. Changing how the packaging is designed can make food last longer.

Q434 **Rebecca Pow:** What sort of packaging makes it not last longer?

Marcus Gover: I talked about the double pack, where half of it can be opened before the other half. That is a very good way of making chicken last longer. There are developments they can take that make food last longer.

Rebecca Pow: That is very true. I do not like this particularly, but if you buy eight slices of ham in one of those packs and you open it, unless you cover it up very carefully in your fridge, which you have to do so it does not go slimy, you often find that four slices have gone dry. People then want to throw them away.

Q435 **Chair:** Reducing food waste and reduced packaging may not be the same thing.

Marcus Gover: No, packaging has a very important role to play in this. That is a good example. I saw that the Co-op had produced a re-sealable pack like that, for bacon rather than ham, so it could be put back again. That is the sort of innovation that can be done.

Q436 **Rebecca Pow:** Are they doing that, largely?

Marcus Gover: We are seeing some good innovations come through, but we would like to see more.

Q437 **Rebecca Pow:** What are you seeing, apart from that?

Marcus Gover: The other thing they can do is communicate on date labels, so best-before and use-by, much more clearly. The research came out yesterday on that.

Q438 **Chair:** Do we need best-before? We will deal with that in a minute.



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Marcus Gover: The use-by should be the date after which it is not safe to eat, and there is only a subset of food where that applies. Yesterday the *Times* was talking about milk on the front page. You generally know when milk is past its best, and there are other things to do with it then as well. It does not need a use-by date. We are working with the dairy sector and retailers to see if that can be changed. The labelling is another area that they can take.

They can communicate with customers in the store, to help them make decisions about buying things, but also at home. Through things like the Clubcard, which Tesco has, they know a lot about people and can help individuals to tailor their behaviour, save their customers money through avoiding food waste but also tackle food waste. That is three things they can do. Andrew can probably give you another three, but I do not know how long you want to talk about this.

Q439 **Rebecca Pow:** What about the Sainsbury's messaging, which was mentioned by Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall? We are given the impression as a consumer that the shelves always have to be burgeoning and full, to make it look like it is a great supermarket and we can have everything we want all the time, at any time. Is that necessarily a good message?

Marcus Gover: That may be something they think we are demanding as individuals. Perhaps, if we are not, we need to let them know that we are not. Certainly, for me personally, it is not a problem. I have been to supermarkets where the shelves have not been full and there is normally something else you can get, but that is a very good service to have. You can always get something, but there is a cost that comes with it.

Rebecca Pow: You could say that that completely negates the whole thing about seasonality, where it would be a good thing if you got there and it had run out, because you had missed the season and then you realised that there was a season. Is that not a selling point?

Q440 **Chair:** That is reversing the whole marketing project that has been going on for years, which is that you can go into a supermarket and buy virtually any vegetable or any fruit, any time of the year. In some ways, we probably need to reverse that, but do you see any sign of that being reversed?

Marcus Gover: There is a lot you can do without changing the offer that the customer has, which we should do first.

Andrew Parry: I was going to use the bread example. This is in the public domain; it was something that Tesco looked at a few years ago. When they first got their granular food waste data, they realised that an awful lot of their in-store waste was from the bakery, and it was because they were keeping lots and lots of different lines of in-store baked bread available all the time. They have looked at that and they have modified that to try to reduce their in-store bakery. The risk there is that you might disappoint a few customers occasionally, but it is for the greater



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good. There are things that retailers can do to look at the way that they manage their stock. The shelf life that they give products also feeds into this because, if the product is going to last longer, you have more time to sell it and therefore there is less chance of it being wasted, either in store or in the home.

Q441 Jim Fitzpatrick: Can we talk about wonky produce? There was a time when the retailers were just rejecting food that did not look perfect from the producers, and now they are selling imperfect lines at a slightly reduced price to reduce waste. Is there a case that that should continue, or should it be incorporated into normal bins and sold as normal produce? Is there a better way of doing this?

Marcus Gover: There is a conversation to be had on how changing the specification, particularly on vegetables and fruit, can impact on food waste.

Andrew Parry: In a previous session, you heard from the four different retailers taking different approaches. Some have gone for dedicated wonky veg lines and others have taken the decision just to widen the specifications. One of the challenges is that, by its very nature, you cannot get a consistent supply of wonky veg, because fruit and veg is a natural product and the degree of wonkiness is going to vary. It is actually quite challenging for a retailer to stock a wonky veg line consistently.

A project that we carried out with the Co-op a couple of years ago looked at potatoes and the waste that was happening in the potato supply chain. We found that a 2-millimetre increase in the specification for potatoes had the potential to reduce waste by 15%. As a customer, I am not sure I would be able to spot a 2-millimetre difference to the potato. In fact, we have a project looking at the different wonky veg schemes, to try to see what works well and perhaps what does not, but it is something that should be mainstream in terms of utilising more of the crop, whether that means having a dedicated wonky veg line or whether it means looking at the specifications and the types of fruit and veg that you grow. All of that could potentially have an impact.

Q442 Jim Fitzpatrick: We were straying on to the guidance on date labelling and, Marcus, you already gave part of that answer. You are working with the Food Standards Agency and Defra to update the guidance. What do you hope to achieve and do you have a timeframe for when you will be coming forward with what is best practice in retail?

Andrew Parry: It is worth saying that we worked very closely with the Food Standards Agency and Defra in 2011, when the previous guidance to industry was produced. This guidance is really about helping the food businesses interpret the legislation in a way that obviously maintains food safety but, from our perspective, helps reduce food waste. We are revisiting this now. The guidance is about saying, "Think carefully about the type of date you put on the pack", because that has implications. If it



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is a use-by date, then we really have to tell people that they cannot consume it after that date and it cannot be redistributed, so it has an impact on the supply chain as well. It is about saying that, as well as having the right date, you need the right storage guidance and you need to people that products can be frozen. The idea is that we will revisit the 2011 guidance. We will broaden it, based on everything we have learned since. We are going to have a public consultation in the spring, with the aim of published the updated guidance in the autumn.

Q443 Jim Fitzpatrick: That is guidance. There is no regulatory or legislative requirement. This is about the industry agreeing a new way of presenting the right information and then it being adopted as widely as possible, so the consumer will know what they should be observing.

Andrew Parry: Currently it is EU legislation in terms of food labelling, but we have already found that we can make really good progress by working with businesses within the existing regulations.

Q444 Angela Smith: We are now moving on to packaging and the relationship between the consumer attitude to packaging and food waste. The use of extra packaging in the way that you outlined earlier, Marcus, in relation to chicken, can lead some consumers to believe that their food is being overly packaged, so they avoid it. What more needs to be done to improve consumer awareness of the role of packaging in reducing waste?

Marcus Gover: This is a very important point. Packaging has a purpose in protecting food, and the impact of making that chicken last longer far outweighs the plastic that might be involved in it. We could also make that plastic recyclable too. WRAP has been doing a lot of other work into not just plastic bottles, but plastic trays and making sure that they can be recycled. It is not just that it is going to go to waste, but we should be able to come up with innovative packaging that can also be recycled.

In terms of trying to encourage consumers to use that innovative packaging, there is some communication that comes with it about saying, "Why this?" and then telling them what to do with it. It is no good if they just open both sides at once; they have to know that the way to use it is to cut it in half and freeze half or to open one half first, use it and then open the other half. The re-sealable bacon package needs to make it clear to open here and not here, where you would wreck the thing. There is definitely a communication piece that goes with it. I think I agree with you, yes.

Q445 Angela Smith: There is a lot of work to do. Do you think there is anything that the Government should do? What should the Government be doing to encourage more environmentally friendly packaging in the first place? For instance, I met recently with the bio-packaging industry. As opposed to petro-plastics, you increasingly have bio-plastics. Do you think that the Government should perhaps be encouraging more innovation in terms of packaging, which is another way of dealing with consumer attitudes towards it?



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Marcus Gover: We need innovation in packaging to help us with food waste and that will be part of our work going forward, but that will be about novel designs that make things last longer. The communication of how to use them will come with it. If we are talking about recyclability of packaging, we are working on that elsewhere. We have a project that is trying to make recycling more consistent across England, and that means consistent not just in the service you have, but consistent in what is put on to the market that can be recycled. You will have been told that this is recyclable or this is not recyclable, so you know one way or the other. That is another stream of work that we have. I would be happy to talk to you more about that privately afterwards, but there is a lot going on there. To talk about bio-packaging, there is biodegradable packaging, but also bio-derived packaging. You can make a piece of plastic from renewable sources that is exactly the same.

Q446 **Chair:** It must not biodegrade through the process, must it?

Marcus Gover: If you put a bit of biodegradable plastic into plastics recycling, that is contaminating it and causing a problem. It is all about how you get the right materials into the right places.

Q447 **Kerry McCarthy:** What figures do you have for the proportion of plastic that is recycled? You said it is recyclable, but my understanding is that quite a small proportion is even collected for recycling and an even smaller proportion is actually recycled.

Marcus Gover: You need to look at plastic bottles and rigid plastics and trays separately. The recycling of plastic bottles has been increasingly rapidly. We are up to about 60% now for plastic bottles. We would have to confirm that number afterwards. Pretty much every local authority collects plastic bottles, either the polyethylene ones, which are the typical milk bottles, or the PET, which are more like fizzy drinks bottles. Just about every local authority collects those, so it is purely a case of people putting them into the recycling bin. It is about increasing recycling behaviours.

Kerry McCarthy: You are saying 60%.

Marcus Gover: It is around 60%, yes.

Kerry McCarthy: I thought the figures I had were quite a lot lower than that.

Marcus Gover: That is for plastic bottles specifically. Plastic packaging as a whole was always one of the lower areas of packaging that was recycled. There has been a lot of work recently, and recycling of packaging has increased to about 42% now. I will have to check that; I had not come prepared to tell you those numbers, but I think it is around there, so there has been quite an increase in it. The non-bottle plastics, the trays and yogurt pots, are now collected by 70% of local authorities, which means that they are widely recycled in terms of the labelling, but



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we need to make sure that they are then being recycled, so it is not as simple as that.

Q448 **Kerry McCarthy:** There is an issue with black plastic, isn't there?

Marcus Gover: Black plastic is a problem that we have been working on. The problem with black plastic is that, when you put it into the sourcing plant, the machinery cannot detect it, which means that it usually ends up not being recycled. We developed an ink that could be detected, but that has not yet been taken up by the industry. If it was, the black would be recyclable.

Q449 **Kerry McCarthy:** Is there not an argument for telling the industry that they should be using easily recyclable plastics and to drop black trays?

Marcus Gover: We are trying to give them an opportunity to do that and some of them are certainly engaging. Once one or two engage, it will increase the volume and bring the price down, and then it will follow. That was our experience when we started working on plastic bottle recycling.

Q450 **Chair:** I suppose the argument at the moment is that these trays are far too expensive. Is that the argument?

Marcus Gover: It adds a bit of cost; that is right. This ink is more expensive than the carbon black ink. It is about getting one or two of them to show leadership and use it, and one or two that we are talking to are seriously looking at that, at the moment.

Q451 **Kerry McCarthy:** I have one final question just on the stats, if I can. You say that 70% of local authorities collect plastic more widely. That is not the same as 70% of that plastic being recycled. Do you have any idea of how many households do it or what proportion of plastics gets collected?

Marcus Gover: The key thing is about whether they recycle everything that they could. We know that a lot of things are recycled from the kitchen, but in the bathroom you have a lot of plastic bottles and shampoo bottles, and people in the bathroom forget their recycling head. It is not just about doing one, but recycling everything you can. The Recycle Now campaign is about that, trying to get people to think not just in the kitchen but elsewhere through the house, and to recycle everything they can, but not to put things that they should not recycle in and contaminate it. There is a complex story there, which is making quite good progress.

Q452 **Angela Smith:** When it comes to unrecyclable materials, there is one particular gin bottle that cannot be recycled. I am not going to mention the brand, but there is one, so I will leave you to find out. Moving on to hospitality, what changes should the hospitality sector make to reduce food waste?

Andrew Parry: It is probably worth starting off very briefly by talking about the results of the hospitality and food service agreement, which ran



from 2012 to 2015. We published the results last month. There was a target of 5% waste prevention for that agreement and they achieved 11%, so there has been good success working with the hospitality sector. Around 25% of the sector had signed up to that agreement and, as well as waste prevention, there was good progress made in increasing redistribution and in terms of diversion of waste from landfill, but obviously we have more to do.

We are working with the sector and trade associations quite intensively at the moment, and we have developed a new approach called Your Business is Food, which is aimed particularly at the hospitality sector, large businesses and small businesses. We are piloting it with 12 businesses at the moment. It provides them with a range of materials and an approach to help them to identify and quantify where food waste or surplus might be arising in the business and then to take action.

We published a range of new case studies on this, and we found that chefs and people who work in commercial kitchens are very creative people and, once they know that there is either excess food being wasted on customers' plates or spoilage waste in the kitchen, they are very good at coming up with solutions themselves, so redesigning menus, thinking about portion sizes or thinking about how they store food. Some of the things that we have talked about that will help householders will also help a lot of small business hospitality organisations. If you are running a bed and breakfast or a small café, then, if you know you can freeze your food, you understand the date label and you know how long it lasts for, that is going to help you as much as it will help you at home.

Q453 Chair: When people go out to a carvery on a Sunday, they very often help themselves to too much food and then they leave it on their plates. How do we politely say to people, "Only take what you are going to eat"? It is not easy to do that in the hospitality sector, but people take far too much and I was always taught that you should not take it if you are not going to eat it.

Andrew Parry: There is lots of very good research showing that you can influence what people take by simple things like the size of the plate and the size of the cutlery. There is a physical limit to how much you can pile on to a small plate.

Chair: They might complain if the plates get too small, mightn't they? No, that is a fair point.

Q454 Kerry McCarthy: On the redistribution of surplus food to charities, do you think that there is place for legislation in this country, either along the lines of what they have in France or along different lines?

Marcus Gover: One of the things about France is that we do not really think France is redistributing much more than we are here in the UK, when you look at how it is measured and so on. We have to start by recognising that we have done quite a lot in the UK on redistribution,



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helped by those who have been promoting it. France is not necessarily doing so much better.

Q455 Kerry McCarthy: What proportion of surplus food that could be donated so that it could be eaten is redistributed at the moment?

Andrew Parry: In the UK, WRAP estimates that about 18% of what could be redistributed is being redistributed. I am aware that that is very different from the percentages that you will have heard from previous witnesses. It is a very important point to make that redistribution in the context of waste prevention can either be done through charities or it can be done through commercial businesses, like Company Shop and Approved Food. Purely in the context of avoiding waste rather than addressing food poverty or hunger, there is a viable commercial route and there is a charitable route. If you look only at what goes to charities, that might be 3% but, if you look at the total redistribution, we think it is about 18%.

Q456 Kerry McCarthy: Do you think that is adequate? How fast are we moving towards adequate levels? Would a voluntary approach get us there or would legislation be preferable?

Andrew Parry: About two or three weeks ago, we published a redistribution ambition for Courtauld 2025 signatories, so all the business signatories have committed to doubling redistribution by 2020. That includes hospitality businesses, retail and manufacturers but, in addition to that, the signatories are going to be working with their suppliers and through trade associations. The research that WRAP published last year said that we think we can increase redistribution fourfold or even sixfold by 2025. We have provided the evidence to show that it can be done and which sectors need to work on this. We have frameworks to help people do that and now we have this ambition, which is genuinely going to spur on a lot of activity

Q457 Kerry McCarthy: Apologies for not being here, but I was at something earlier that went on a lot longer than I thought it was going to, so I missed the section when you were talking about Courtauld. The problem with Courtauld is that it is voluntary and a lot of companies have not signed up to it, particularly on the manufacturing side. If we are relying on Courtauld as the mechanism, are we relying on the good guys who have already signed up to it and who are already in the fold to do more? What can you do to make the others pull their weight?

Andrew Parry: There is an awful lot being done. Last month, Asda announced something called the Surplus Swap scheme for its suppliers. The majority of the businesses that supply Asda will not be Courtauld signatories. Asda has put in place a mechanism to help them reduce food waste and manage food better. We work with trade associations like FDF, the Chilled Food Association and others, so we can reach a lot of the non-signatories, either through the big signatories or through trade associations. That is what we are trying to do. There are things like the



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campaign I talked about, Your Business is Food, and we have another one, but I have forgotten the name of it. They have modules focused on redistribution, which are designed to be used by businesses of all kinds, not just signatories.

Q458 Kerry McCarthy: When will you have an idea of how much progress you are making on Courtauld, though? Again, you may have covered this earlier, and I apologise, but it is a three-year reporting cycle. There are another two years to go before we get any figures. Is that a problem, because it seems to me that you could get to that stage and then discover that you are not making as much progress as you would have hoped to?

Marcus Gover: The signatories have to report into us on their progress every year. They have committed to doubling it going forward. There is a working group on redistribution, which is one of the best attended. There is a lot of leadership being shown. We agree with you that more can be done on redistribution and there is more potential. It is a really good way of preventing the food waste that is there on the manufacturing side, but also the retail side. The approach that we believe in is the voluntary approach. We can play our part in helping to increase it through that, which is what we will try to do.

Andrew Parry: We will have data from both the food businesses and the redistribution organisations in the autumn, for 2015 and 2016. That will give us a good idea of what has changed since we published our research last year.

Q459 Kerry McCarthy: Will those figures be made public or are they just for your use?

Andrew Parry: I am hesitating, but I am pretty sure we said we would publish them at the end of this year. We are definitely publishing every three years.

Chair: Any figures that you might have to hand now would be quite useful for our report, if you are able to release them, I understand.

Q460 Simon Hart: I would like your view on whether, as in the eyes of some witnesses, you see some advantages in tax breaks for people responsible for redistributing food waste in the charitable sector, non-charitable sector, haulage—you name it. Is that a road down which we should go?

Marcus Gover: We are not tax specialists, but our understanding is that, if something has not been sold, there is already a tax relief on it. That is our understanding from HMRC. Perhaps the guidance on that for organisations could be made clearer, but we believe there is already a tax relief on food that is not sold. Charities can also get tax reliefs, so we believe that there is quite a bit there already.

Q461 Simon Hart: Do you think hauliers know this?



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Marcus Gover: There could be a tax break for the hauliers or the people not selling the food, but the charity that is taking it has tax advantages. We are not sure that hauliers is the place where it is needed. You would have to be careful you were not doubling tax breaks, if you were to put in more. It is an area in which I am not a specialist, so I should leave it really.

Q462 **Simon Hart:** Would there therefore be an alternative argument for the creation of a fund, which would have the same effect and subsidise the distribution network through direct cash, as opposed to tax forgone?

Marcus Gover: If there was an opportunity for WRAP to have a fund in support, my focus would be household and consumer food waste, because there is so much of it. I would be going for that first in terms of a fund at the moment. Our priority is to reduce food waste.

Q463 **Simon Hart:** Would you see yourselves as administering that?

Marcus Gover: Yes, we have administered funds in the past. That is the sort of thing we can do, but my priority would be consumer food waste at the moment, because there is so much of it.

Q464 **Rebecca Pow:** If businesses are not following the waste hierarchy, what do you think should be done to enforce it? It is voluntary, isn't it?

Marcus Gover: No, it is not voluntary. The waste hierarchy is a legal requirement. It is regulation 12 of the Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2011, so it is legal. We believe that the Environment Agency is responsible for enforcement. I do not know if you are taking evidence from them, but it is a legal requirement.

Chair: We will have the Minister in eventually. The Environment Agency does the enforcement.

Marcus Gover: You are allowed to deviate from it if the lifecycle analysis shows that what you are doing would be better.

Q465 **Rebecca Pow:** What evidence do you have that the Environment Agency is playing its role correctly?

Marcus Gover: That is not an area that I have gone to get evidence from. That is not one of our remits. Certainly the hierarchy would say to prevent food waste, redistribute it, feed it to animals or recycle it, before everything else. That would be following the hierarchy. We believe that, if you did lifecycle analysis, it would support sticking to the hierarchy.

Q466 **Rebecca Pow:** Do you know what percentage of businesses might not be following it?

Marcus Gover: No, we do not.

Q467 **Rebecca Pow:** Is that because the Environment Agency is not collecting the data?



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Marcus Gover: I do not know.

Andrew Parry: We have looked at Environment Agency data as part of the way we built up our evidence base for food surplus and waste in the supply chain. The Environment Agency definitely has data on how much food waste from businesses goes to AD, for example, and how much goes to landfill. We have shown that there is certainly potential to move material up the hierarchy. What food manufacturers and retailers have done very effectively is almost to reach zero waste to landfill, but there is more that could be moved up to AD. We know that there is material going to AD that could be used for animal feed or redistribution.

Q468 **Rebecca Pow:** Do you think that some businesses are taking the easiest option with their waste? It might be easier to send it to the anaerobic digester or to landfill.

Chair: It can all be easily collected together.

Andrew Parry: Sometimes, there is a lack of awareness. We might be coming on to animal feed, but some businesses genuinely assume that the material they are producing is not allowed to be fed to animals, so they look further down the hierarchy. Similarly with redistribution, we know that there are issues around people concerned about food safety and other aspects of their products, so they think it is not suitable for redistribution.

Q469 **Rebecca Pow:** Do you have any examples of which companies might think those things?

Andrew Parry: We certainly have the figure of the 37,000 tonnes of material that is going to animal feed that could be redistributed, for example. A lot of that is probably bakery products.

Q470 **Rebecca Pow:** What could it be redistributed for—bread and butter pudding?

Andrew Parry: The 37,000 tonnes of bakery products would be suitable for human consumption, so that is part of what we are trying to do.

Chair: It would certainly be for animal consumption as well.

Q471 **Rebecca Pow:** If they managed to redistribute it higher up the chain, surely they would get more value, or is that not correct? It would be worth the businesses thinking about it.

Andrew Parry: The greatest value can be gained from not producing the waste in the first place. You are talking about £2,000 or £3,000 a tonne as the value of the food that is not sold.

Q472 **Rebecca Pow:** That was my point about the farmers, in the first place. They are producing food that is not even being eaten. Do you have any ideas who the main culprits might be who are not adhering to the hierarchy?



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Andrew Parry: As Marcus said, we probably do not have enough information to know whether they have good reasons for material being sent where it is. What we know overall is how much could be moved up the hierarchy. As I said, our role is to work with businesses, to get them to have a look at what they producing and understand the criteria for things like redistribution and animal feed, so that they can then determine the most appropriate and most beneficial route.

Q473 **Rebecca Pow:** Do you have enough people doing all of this, because it sounds like that would be an individual approach to advise them, because every business is different?

Chair: I think you have been saying that it is not your role to do that; it is the Environment Agency's role. Is that what you were saying?

Marcus Gover: That is a question you need to put to the Environment Agency, about how it is regulating that particular regulation and its approach to it.

Q474 **Chair:** What I find fascinating about the answer on the Environment Agency is to what degree you believe that the Environment Agency is saying to big retailers, "You must push all this further up the hierarchy, so that less goes to the anaerobic digester". I have never really heard much about the Environment Agency doing that. Have you heard that?

Marcus Gover: I do not think we have evidence either to support or go against what you are saying. I could just give you an opinion.

Q475 **Rebecca Pow:** Can I just have an answer to my question I was asking about the advice? I do not think it is the Environment Agency's job to give advice, so who is giving the businesses this advice, analysing what they say and saying that it could be used for consumption, rather than being sent for animal feed?

Marcus Gover: For example, we have talked about an outreach campaign aimed at the smaller businesses in the food and drink supply chain. That would be giving them advice on how to prevent food waste and what the priorities are to do with this, about redistribution, about animal feed, about recycling and about minimising disposal. That would be very much in line with the hierarchy, so we are going to work with the trade associations on that. In terms of us reducing food waste, that is quite a priority, working with those small non-signatory parts of Courtauld.

Q476 **Kerry McCarthy:** Last month I asked Defra what discussions the Secretary of State had had with the Environment Agency about its responsibility to enforce the waste hierarchy and any cases in which the hierarchy had not been observed. The answer was basically that they had not had discussions, so Defra does not see it as its role to nudge the Environment Agency. The bit that they went on to say clearly gave me the impression that they thought it was more about prosecuting environmental crime than it was about taking a proactive approach to



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move things up the hierarchy. It was about finding the culprits and perhaps prosecuting the worst examples, although they did not give any examples of prosecutions. Do you think that is a fair assessment and do you think they could be more proactive?

Marcus Gover: I do not really think we can comment on it.

Chair: I think you are saying that we had better ask the Environment Agency that, but we have all raised some very good points, so we will do that.

Q477 **Angela Smith:** I am moving on to animal feed. The European Union put a ban on the feeding of catering waste to livestock, after the outbreak of foot and mouth. Is it time to lift that ban? It is perhaps a little precautionary, but it may have outlived its usefulness.

Marcus Gover: It is a very difficult area. You would not want to see any repeats of previous trouble, so it is something that would have to be looked at very carefully.

Q478 **Angela Smith:** Who has looked at it? If you have the legislative framework in the right place, in terms of safety standards, the benefits are enormous. Sending food waste to animal feed scores higher on environmental and health indicators than anaerobic digestion, so is it not something worth aiming for?

Andrew Parry: In the short term, we identified that we can probably increase the amount of food surplus/waste going to animal feed by about 20%, within the current regulations, so there is quite a lot to go for before you even think about changing the legislation. We produced updated guidance on that last year. The other thing that is worth mentioning is that we are working with Feedback as part of an EU-funded project called REFRESH. I think you heard from Tristram Stuart, who also leads the Pig Idea, which is the campaign looking at potentially relaxing those regulations, drawing on some of the innovations in other parts of the world, to treat food waste and try to avoid what happened in the past happening again. Part of that EU project will produce evidence to feed into that debate. The European Food Safety Authority has also looked at it. We need to have the right evidence to have the discussion and working with Tristram as part of this EU project will help inform that discussion.

Q479 **Angela Smith:** I assume our Government are supporting that project.

Andrew Parry: We have certainly had discussions with Feedback and Defra's animal by-products team. When we updated our guidance, Feedback, Defra animal by-products and the Food Standards Agency fed into that.

Q480 **Angela Smith:** When should we expect to see reports on progress of the project? What is the timeline on this?



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Andrew Parry: The EU-funded project is a four-year project and we are one year in, so that is three years remaining. I would probably need to get back to you on the specifics of the animal feed project.

Angela Smith: That would be useful.

Q481 **Chair:** The resistance to feeding pigswill to pigs is the outbreak of foot and mouth back in 2001 but, properly cooked and properly treated, it is a very good feed. It is making sure we have the reassurance that there is a system in place, so that it would not spread disease in the future.

Marcus Gover: We want the experts to be sure, but our focus is the 20% that we could use now, under the current regulations, which is not being used.

Q482 **Angela Smith:** If we could have the timeline in terms of animal feed, that would be really useful. Thank you. Just moving on to recycling, why is such a low percentage of food waste currently recycled?

Marcus Gover: There are two challenges. You heard from Jacob Hayler and some of the local authorities about this in February. There are two challenges. One is the infrastructure for recycling food, food waste collections, and the other is the use of them. You need both of them to increase recycling. Currently, 44% of households in England have access to a food waste recycling service, so half the households can recycle food. We could make that a lot better. In Wales, pretty much every single household can recycle food and they probably recycle twice as much food as England.

The other part is the use of it and encouraging people to use their food waste recycling system. At the moment, we are recycling around 10% of the food that households could recycle, which is quite a small amount. How do you get people to use the existing system? Some of that is about why they would want to and making the case to them about why you need to do it. The other is making it easy. We know that food bin liners make a big difference to participation. Where we have done trials and provided liners, use of it has gone up. The other thing that has been quite effective is stickers to remind people, usually on the residual bin, which say, "If it is food, use the other one". There is that sort of intervention just at the point of action. We have had quite good success in using those.

Through Recycle Now, where there are food waste collections, we are focusing communication activity to try to get people to use them, which will help to increase it. Our approach to trying to increase the amount of food waste recycling infrastructure is through the project on consistency, which you might have heard about. That is where we have been working with local authorities, retailers, brands, waste companies and recyclers. We started by saying that, at the moment, we have a lot of different approaches to how to recycle in England. Could we make it simpler? There was agreement from that group, and it gives us a chance to do this



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if everyone has bought into it. It is making what comes on to the market in terms of packaging, but also how it is recycled, more consistent.

The first thing that we agreed would make a big difference was if every local authority could recycle the same things. We identified six materials—plastics, cans, paper and so on. That includes food waste. As part of that, there is a move to encourage local authorities to add a food waste collection. WRAP is going around to each of those local authorities to help them look at the business case. In the current times when finances are very tight, unless there is a business case, it is going to be very hard to persuade a local authority to put in a food waste collection. We think there is a case. When we do our assessment of the whole of England, overall it comes out positive: there is a case for doing it. It would save money and increase recycling, but there will be winners and losers. If we can get the winners to move, then we can increase food waste recycling.

Angela Smith: Can I ask a further question, Chair?

Chair: I am conscious that we have a few more questions. If you ask that one and we get quick answers, please, that is fine.

Q483 **Angela Smith:** The local authorities need a business case. I entirely understand that, but we have to be careful about food waste recycling. I totally agree with it, but I have recently heard that teabags, which everybody thinks are organic and recyclable, have a degree of plastic in them, which feeds through to the marine environment in the end. Forget microbeads; this is potentially much bigger. Is more work needed to ensure that what we are recycling by way of food waste is genuinely good for the environment?

Marcus Gover: A bit like other recycling, this is about guidance on what food waste can go in the recycling bin. I know that the likes of the producers of teabags are working very hard to make it so that their teabags are compostable and that innovation should come through. The other thing you see is people trying to change the recyclability of what they put on to the market, so you will see it change in the future.

Q484 **Kerry McCarthy:** You have already said a little about what you are doing to encourage local authorities to look at collecting more food waste. Is there a case for a statutory requirement for them to collect food waste separately?

Marcus Gover: We are trying to make the business case. That is our approach, and we think that there is a business case to help them. If you are going to bring in legislation to do it, which has happened in Scotland, and Wales and Northern Ireland are both looking at it too, it is not something that you can do quickly. It needs to be very well planned and it is not something that can be done on its own. You need to make sure that the services are there for it as well. They have had to look at



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stopping food waste going to the sewer in Scotland and Wales, for instance, so there is quite a package of measures.

We did some research into this in 2012 and put together a feasibility study into whether you could have landfill restrictions on a whole range of materials, but one of them was biodegradable waste. If you looked at the cost to society, it showed that there was a cost. The extra infrastructure cost more than the benefits, on a pure cost-benefit analysis. If you looked at the private costs to business, there was a plus side, so it was quite delicately balanced. That does not make a strong case at the moment, but it may be time to look at it again. We need the proper evidence really.

Q485 Kerry McCarthy: That is the business case, but there is obviously a wider environmental case and possibly even an ethical case. Scotland and Wales decided to do it, so how long did it take them to do it?

Marcus Gover: I am trying to remember. It took a while to put the case together, to bring it in and to communicate it, because there were requirements for businesses to separate food waste from residual waste. There is a whole range of what you could mean by a landfill ban. Is it just a landfill restriction or is it a requirement to separate? There is quite a range of things it could be.

Q486 Kerry McCarthy: How about a requirement on businesses of a certain size? That has been suggested. At least the larger businesses could be required to do so.

Marcus Gover: Yes, that could be interesting. If there was a requirement to separate, they would see their residual waste costs going down and there could be a payback for it.

Q487 Kerry McCarthy: You sound like you are looking at it very much from the economic point of view. Do you see it as your role to make the business case stack up?

Marcus Gover: As WRAP, we are trying to work within the current systems to get the most out of them, and that is what our day-to-day work is all about. I do not think there is an easy answer. It would be worth looking again at the evidence for how a landfill restriction or a requirement to sort could help the UK.

Q488 Kerry McCarthy: This is the final question. We have been told that it would be more difficult to do that in rural areas than in urban areas, but do Scotland and Wales do it across the piece, in rural areas as well?

Marcus Gover: There are exemptions in Scotland for some of the more rural areas, the difficult, remote areas.

Q489 Rebecca Pow: I have spoken to our big waste collector in Somerset. I am not sure this applies to Somerset, actually, because we are quite good at collecting our food waste, but, if it adds an extra cost to collecting it, that cost is borne by the local authority, not by the



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businesses producing the food or even the person throwing out the food. Are you rethinking all of that, because that puts the onus on the local authority, which in fact then costs the taxpayer more, if they need a different lorry, a different method or they have to travel further to dump it. Should we be rethinking all of it?

Marcus Gover: That is what the business case is all about. It looks at how a local authority is carrying out its collections for recycling and for residual, and whether there is a more efficient system that could include food waste and make the whole thing pay back, as well as increasing recycling. You are unlikely to be able to change all at once. The change can probably only happen when contracts come up for renewal. It is about phasing it through. You have to look at the business case; in some places it will work and in some places it will not.

Q490 **Chair:** The Environmental Services Association has said that mandatory food waste collection should be accompanied by a TEEP requirement. Do you agree with this or not?

Marcus Gover: It sounds sensible in broad terms, I would say, yes.

Chair: Okay, so you agree with it.

Q491 **Simon Hart:** There was mention in other evidence about the consistency between household waste and recycling collection. Where do you sit on that? Do you think that there is more to be done?

Marcus Gover: Yes, we do. We have been working hard to come up with an offer, a vision, essentially, for how recycling collections could be more consistent and effective in England. It starts with consistency of what is collected, and there is quite strong agreement about the common set of materials that should be collected for recycling. When you could make the changes depends on when contracts come to a finish and, as I said before, it will not make sense for every local authority. For food waste, for instance, it will not make sense in every local authority for food waste to have a separate collection. Yes, we think that there is more to be had from a more consistent approach to recycling.

Q492 **Simon Hart:** I do not know how consistent it is even across Wales, where I am. There is a food waste provision, the orange bags. There are the black bags and then there is a separate thing for bottles, all of which are collected by different people, at different times. Some are collected weekly; some are fortnightly. You have to be reasonably on the ball to remember which week it is and all that kind of stuff. It sometimes strikes me that I wonder whether we have got that absolutely right, whether, as the Chairman whispered in my ear just now, it is being done to make us feel good or whether it is being done with some real good intention in mind.

Marcus Gover: You are highlighting the importance of the service to the resident there, because that is important as well. In Wales, the blueprint that has been produced is how the Welsh Government would like



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recycling to happen. They are not mandating it, but they are saying that they think this is the best way to do it. It is around a weekly collection of recyclable material and fortnightly or less collection of residual material, but they will be recycling so much, or you will be recycling so much, in Wales, that you will not have very much residual waste left. The target is heading towards 70% recycling and they are making very good progress. They are way ahead. I think Wales is the third in Europe now in terms of recycling, so it is making very good progress.

Q493 **Simon Hart:** What is the figure in Scotland?

Marcus Gover: Scotland is similar to England. I cannot remember if it is just ahead now. It is around 43% to 45%. I cannot remember the numbers offhand, I am afraid.

Q494 **Simon Hart:** In both of those devolved nations, money is made available from the Welsh or Scottish Government to local authorities, is it not?

Marcus Gover: Yes.

Q495 **Simon Hart:** Are the UK Government being more resistant to that?

Marcus Gover: If you want local authorities to change their service, then providing funding to do it is a very good way of making it happen quickly, which is the approach that Wales has taken. There are 22 local authorities in Wales; there are around 350 in England. The scale is huge and the funding requirement would be huge. I am not sure that is going to be possible in England, hence our approach of trying to make the business case. We think there is a business case, just as there is a business case in Wales. Local authorities in Wales are saving money, quite significant sums in fact, by making the changes they are making.

Q496 **Rebecca Pow:** As a keen gardener, I was very keen to ask this question. What support would you like from the Government to encourage home composting?

Marcus Gover: At WRAP, we absolutely are advocates of home composting. In the past, we have run quite big home composting programmes, helping people to buy home composting bins and providing support and advice to get home composting going. It is very good for garden waste; it is very good for vegetables and kitchen waste. We would not recommend it for meat, because there are vermin issues and so on. You also need something to do with the compost. I have three compost bins at home and we produce great compost, which goes on the vegetable patch. It is fantastic and pretty much all our food waste goes that way.

Rebecca Pow: The meat does not, though.

Marcus Gover: We tend to eat it, really.

Rebecca Pow: That is one thing that you are told not to put in.



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Marcus Gover: That is exactly right. I have a separate food waste collection, so the bits of meat and bone go that way, but we are certainly strong advocates of home composting.

Q497 **Rebecca Pow:** You and I, and hopefully the members of this Committee, know all about composting, but what could we do to encourage more people to compost? Do you think there are lots of people who could compost and might have room to compost who are not doing it?

Marcus Gover: We got quite an increase in home composting through our work in the early years. I am sure there could be more to encourage it. I suspect it is something that needs to be done locally, through the local authority.

Q498 **Rebecca Pow:** I remember when I was the environment correspondent on HTV and I launched a project that the local authority recycling department was running. They had a special deal on those Dalek bins and they were giving them away. First of all, they were free and then they had a very reduced price. That went down a storm. What about something like that?

Andrew Parry: We had home composting advisers at the same time. Although it is not an area in which I was working, I guess, as Marcus has said before, the decision was to prioritise food waste prevention and the launch of Love Food Hate Waste. 500,000 tonnes of food waste are home composted every year in the UK, and perhaps there is not as much potential there compared to the other priorities of increased participation, separate food waste collections and food waste prevention, on the other hand.

Q499 **Rebecca Pow:** To go back to my point at the beginning about helping the hard-pressed families of the UK, this is another message. If you are a gardener or you have a small bit of land, this saves you money again, because you never have to buy any compost or manure. Could that not be part of your campaign?

Marcus Gover: Also, if I home compost my garden and kitchen waste, the local authority do not have to collect it, so it is saving them money too.

Q500 **Rebecca Pow:** That is another good point. Would you agree that there is a real feel-good factor in producing one's own compost?

Marcus Gover: It is eventually nice, yes.

Chair: You are now leading the witness.

Rebecca Pow: Can I just throw in one more thing there?

Chair: Yes, but very quickly, Rebecca.

Q501 **Rebecca Pow:** Have you thought about working on this with the Royal Horticultural Society and the Garden Media Guild, which writes about



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home composting and these things all the time, but is very much talking to a converted audience? There must be really good mileage here.

Marcus Gover: We have in the past done a lot of work with those sorts of organisations, about not just home compost, but commercial compost, in trying to create markets for it to demonstrate how well it works for horticulture.

Q502 **Rebecca Pow:** I have one more thing: home wormeries. Are you supporting those? You have them on the side to keep your tiger worms in.

Marcus Gover: Yes, I have one. They are very good. We do not have an active programme on them, but we certainly think that they are a good thing to do.

Q503 **Chair:** Rebecca makes a very good point, in the fact that we could encourage people both to compost and then grow something with what they have composted. I know that they cannot do it if they do not have any land, a garden or anything, but lots of people out there have a small patch of garden and could do it. That is something that we could do a lot more with.

Marcus Gover: It reconnects people with food again.

Q504 **Chair:** If they were growing it organically from their waste, it would be simply wonderful. Would you like to see a stronger anaerobic digestion industry in England and, if so, what support does the industry need from the Government or is it almost too powerful already? What is your position on it?

Marcus Gover: If we want to recycle food waste from households, we need to collect it, but we need somewhere for it to go. The AD industry and the composting industry are both very important. We have worked closely with them in trying to help them develop two standards, PAS 100 and PAS 110, which allow their product to be classified as recycled and give confidence to those who use it that it is a good product that will be safe and will grow good carrots, and so on. That is very important.

It has done very well. There have been about 100 AD plants coming into operation over the last 12 months alone, so it is growing fast. It is a harder market to operate in, as I am sure you have heard from previous witnesses, in terms of changes to some of the incentives. The important parts are the biogas, the gate fee and the digestate for AD. The biogas was originally just used for electricity; it is now being used as a transport fuel and is going directly into the grid, so the renewable heating centres become relevant. There has been a lot of innovation there. I was near Bristol, where Wessex Water is running a bus to the airport, so there is some great innovation going on there.

The last place that we still need to work on is around the digestate. We have proved it is safe. We have done a huge research programme to



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show that digestate is a great fertiliser and completely safe to use, but there is more innovation that could make it an easier product, in terms of not being such a huge volume. It is so good, it should be a fertiliser that you buy.

Q505 Chair: I agree with you. For me, there is a great need to use food waste that genuinely cannot be recycled in other ways in AD plants because, at the moment, it is slightly beyond this inquiry, but we are seeing too much agricultural land being used to grow crops that are then put into anaerobic digesters in order to get the price for the electricity or for the gas. Therefore, we need to make sure more food waste goes in. Do you think the incentives are right, not enough or too much?

Marcus Gover: Our focus is certainly on the food waste, as you say. There is always a balance between the growth of food waste collections and the growth of the capacity to treat it. One normally leads to the other. At the moment, the capacity to treat it is ahead of the collection and hence the gate fees have been coming down, which is a challenge for the operators, so we need more collections to feed what we have and then we will need more capacity. We will need to keep doing that.

Chair: We have to get the gate fee right.

Marcus Gover: We need more food waste to be collected. That is what would help the AD industry to grow.

Q506 Chair: Finally, would you like to see a ban on the landfilling of food and how successful has such a ban been in Scotland?

Marcus Gover: We talked a little bit about this before, but it is certainly something that has been used in Scotland and used quite effectively. It has been used in Wales and it is being looked at in Northern Ireland as well. It is probably time that we had a look at it in England. It is not obvious that it should be the answer, but it is probably time to do another analysis of it and see whether it would add something and whether there would be more pros than cons for it here.

Q507 Chair: Going back to the previous question, if you were not putting it into landfill, then you would put it into an anaerobic digester if you could not recycle it in another way.

Marcus Gover: There are certainly drivers to take it up the hierarchy. The medium gate fee for an AD plant is £45 a tonne. Landfill will cost you just over £100 a tonne at the moment, so there is quite an incentive to steer it towards AD rather than landfill, but we need the collection systems to be efficient as part of that, as well.

Q508 Chair: If you have a contract where you are collecting everything together, then you are still going to landfill.

Marcus Gover: You need time to change.

Chair: Thank you very much. You have presented us with some very



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good evidence. We questioned you thoroughly this afternoon, I think.

Marcus Gover: There were some very good questions, thank you.

Chair: Thank you for some very good answers. Your evidence will make part of our recommendations in our report. We thank you very much for coming back a second time. You must be a glutton for punishment to come back a second time to our Committee, but thank you very much.

Marcus Gover: Thank you. If there is more that you need, please let us know.

Chair: There are one or two bits of written evidence we would like and, if you would not mind, we may come back to you on one or two other matters. We would be delighted if you could reply to us in writing.