

Environmental Audit Committee

Oral evidence: [UK progress on reducing F-gases emissions](#), HC 469

Tuesday 28 November 2017

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[Watch the meeting](#)

Members present: Mary Creagh (Chair); Caroline Lucas; Kerry McCarthy; Anna McMorrin; John McNally; Dr Matthew Offord; Joan Ryan; Alex Sobel.

Questions 1 - 40

Witness

[I:](#) Lord Deben, Chair of the Committee on Climate Change.

Examination of witness

Witness: Lord Deben.

Q1 **Chair:** I would like to welcome our guest this morning, Lord Deben, Chairman of the Committee on Climate Change. You are very welcome. We are kicking off our inquiry into F-gases and this is something that your committee looks at. It says that F-gases contribute only about 3% to 3.5% of overall greenhouse gas emissions, so how big a problem are F-gases in the UK?

Lord Deben: First of all, could I declare an interest? I have worked on this a long time before I was involved in the Climate Change Committee, and it was as a result of the work of my company that Coca-Cola ceased to use F-gases in their refrigeration. One of the problems that we all have to face is that business is well ahead of Governments on this. If the world's biggest purchaser of F-gases, in effect because of refrigeration, can find an alternative and they found it themselves, if you see what I mean—they did not take an off-the-shelf thing; they had to work for a long period of time, actually with Greenpeace, to do that—it shows that in the background there is very real ability of business to replace F-gases.

I think F-gases are a serious source. They vary in their damage to the climate and some are very much more powerful than others. It seems to me an unnecessary source, because in almost every area they can be replaced, even in the area that the campaigners use, which is the health area. Almost every kind of propellant inhalant can be replaced by dry powder—and I know that because I use them—and the dry powder alternative is usually better than the propellant. The only use, as I understand it, for propellant is for very small children who cannot be told to breath in, so have to have something forced into them, or very old people who can no longer suck, in that sense. We could remove a great deal of what is on the market now very much more quickly than we are intending.

Q2 **Chair:** Should they receive more attention than other greenhouse gases, do you think? You talked about the different ones. I am looking at sulphur hexafluoride, which has a global warming potential 23,500 times greater than carbon dioxide. We are all novices on this Committee, but that certainly sounds pretty damaging. Where does the sulphur hexafluoride—SF₆—get used and where do the asthma inhalers use it? What is the name of that gas?

Lord Deben: In most cases here, the argument is a mixed one. The first argument is that it is the most satisfactory thing and there is not an alternative, which is true of all of them. When you get through that, the next argument is, "There is an alternative, but it is more expensive." The real trouble is that nobody is pushing for this, which is why the Climate Change Committee, having pressed the Government to act, has now decided to do its own research on this in order to try to make it very clear what the scientific basis is for moving forward very much faster.



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Britain has a very bad history in this. Drawing from my own experience, we were one of the countries that voted against a ban in the European Union when Mrs Beckett was the Minister responsible. When I asked a question in the House of Commons on this subject, it became clear that nobody on the ministerial Bench knew what HFCs were at the time; they had merely taken what was the advice of their civil servants. There was a complete ban proposed in the Conservative manifesto in the last election with Mr Blair.

Q3 **Chair:** 2010?

Lord Deben: No, it must have been 1995. It was a plan for an absolute ban. This is not making any party political noise; it has been around in the system for a very long time. Here we are in 2017 and we have pretty thin and slow EU proposals and even the Kigali proposals again take a very long time to be completed.

Q4 **Chair:** I want to come back to the Commission, because their data indicated the HFC phase-down for 2015 had overachieved by 8%. They seem to be doing better than their published targets. Price data suggests HFCs with higher global warming potential are much more expensive, so it looks like the market is working as well. Do you think the F-gas regulation is working as it was intended to work?

Lord Deben: I think it is, but it does show up its weakness in the sense that if you have a regulation like this and you over-perform by 8%, it does suggest that the original figures were not very tight. What you want is figures that are very tight, that make it very difficult to perform and you just do it. You should always regulate just this side of the impossible if you really want to make these things work. This seems to me a very clear example that this could have been done.

I have never heard any public discussion, for example, about the reality of being able to replace the inhalants. The fact is that there are, as I understand it, something like 6 million people using these inhalants. It is small, but it is a big bit. It is something that you really could change and I only know about it from picking it up in a business context. Somebody told me; I would not have known about it otherwise.

Q5 **Chair:** Do you think that price and costs are the primary drivers for reducing F-gas emissions or do you think that the regulations need to be tighter?

Lord Deben: Yes, I do. I worry about the argument about cost, because when we investigated so that I could come to this Committee, we wanted to check the latest situation. There is a general belief that it is cost, but nobody much seems to be able to put any figures on it. The other thing is that if you find alternatives you soon find that the cost reduces, because you then have a proper market. But unless you are pressed to find those alternatives, you do not do so. Regulation has a double purpose: one is to reduce, as it should be in this case; but it also is one that helps to make



the market by making it valuable to find alternatives that are not damaging.

Q6 Chair: If more intervention is required, what would you favour? You said regulation.

Lord Deben: I would like to see a commitment by the Government that we would phase out HFCs entirely and a much shorter programme for doing so. That is why we are producing the scientific background, in order to give strength to that kind of programme. This is a good example of the damage of leaving the European Union, because it means that we will no longer have the opportunity to become one of the leaders in the European Union for changing these regulations. It just shows yet again that Britain will not be able to step up to the mark and do the job that she ought to do.

The trouble is that were we to leave the European Union, I know perfectly well what will happen: we will then have more or less the same things as the European Union has on this and excuse it by saying, "It is very difficult to get out of line because the equipment and suchlike is all going to have to be altered and really we cannot do that." If there are any advantages in leaving the European Union—I find it quite hard to think that there are—one of them would be if we were the kind of country that said, "We are now not caught up in that, so we are now going to ban it." But if anyone here thinks that that is going to happen, it is a view of politics that I have not so far been able to adhere to.

Q7 Caroline Lucas: If the UK were to fall outside of the EU's F-gas regulation and had to rely solely on the mechanism provided by the Kigali amendment to the Montreal protocol, would that be an adequate backstop? If not, why?

Lord Deben: No, because it does not partake of the urgency that the battle against climate change should be given. That is why I say that what we should do, were we to leave the European Union, is to use the evidence that by then will have been produced by the Climate Change Committee, apply that science and really, right on the edge of that, be reducing HFCs. There will be a row, because the people who produce these things are extremely good at campaigning—they are not always as ethical as I would like, but they are very good at campaigning. Do not think that there would not be a real row and all sorts of stories about the effects of not having it.

Q8 Caroline Lucas: I think I might know the answer to the next question, but I will ask it anyway. In the memorandum to the treaty that will ratify the Kigali amendment, the Government indicated that the regulations necessary to implement it might be subject to the so-called "one in, three out rule" in order to reduce red tape. As a former Secretary of State for the Environment, are you concerned that that rule might be applied in cases like this, and indeed in other areas of environmental protection?



Lord Deben: It is a perfectly good rule if you have a lot of stuff you should not have and want to get rid of, but the idea of having such a rule in order not to do something that you need to do and that is part of our protection from climate change, it seems to me that would be a mistake. I hope it is merely a formality. Indeed, I have so far not seen that being used. The Government have in general terms been extremely sensible and committed on climate change. I would be very surprised if that were to stop it. If it were to stop it, I think that I, as Chairman of the Climate Change Committee, might have something to say about it.

- Q9 **Joan Ryan:** The Climate Change Committee produced a trajectory pathway for the UK Government to meet their greenhouse gas emissions targets. That included the pathway for F-gases, a trajectory that we have been looking at. Your report "Closing the Policy Gap", which you published in 2015, suggested that progress on F-gas emissions over the last few years was broadly flat-lining and that the UK is in danger of moving away from the trajectory path, so in precisely the opposite direction to which we would all hope we would be going. Could you say a bit more about that? How would you characterise the UK's progress on reducing these F-gas emissions and how do we compare with other EU and OECD countries in reducing the emissions?

Lord Deben: First of all, we are none of us in the European Union good. I could not say there was any. In so far as some are better than others, I would not suggest that there was necessarily a causal relationship to that. It is just that we have been unwilling to face the fact that these gases are among the easiest to remove; that you can get rid of them. The only reason that I told my early anecdote about that situation was that it illustrates that it has never had the kind of importance in the British Government's thinking, or indeed in the thinking of the civil service. It has never had that.

I think the reason for that is that it has always been said it is two things: first, it is very difficult; and secondly, "It is perfectly all right, Minister, because"—and I have been told this—"these are now sealed units and therefore there is no escape of the gases". I did break that by saying, "I am thinking of banning top-up." In other words, if it is sealed when you do it in the first place, why not ban the top-up? The industry went mad because of course when you look at the figures, there is a great deal of business in the top-up bit. I do not believe that there is no leakage.

Almost every argument of this sort is used. Therefore, I think all political parties—I am perfectly able to be entirely independent—have failed to see that this is a win that is there to be taken if we were tough enough. The fact that we had a bad reputation with the European Union on this subject because we sided with the nos originally and we never got back to the position of being the leaders I think is very sad.

- Q10 **Joan Ryan:** At the beginning you said that you have looked at the most recent stats and progress and so on. Would it be fair to say that, because of reporting lags for EU data, it is too early to say whether UK adherence



to the EU's F-gas regulation is beginning to have an impact or not?

Lord Deben: It is slightly difficult. All the indications are that it is beginning to have an impact, but we certainly do not have enough figures to show that in any serious manner. We can just say that it is beginning to have an impact. One of the things that we will be doing in the work that we are going to do is to try to define not only what the impact is, but what will be the real reduction if you merely base yourself on the present agreements.

Q11 **Chair:** When will your study be completed?

Lord Deben: That I cannot tell you. I think about the middle of next year, but I cannot give you an absolute date because we are in the difficult situation of having to get out the study of the Government's clean growth plan, which has pushed the whole programme into a rather different position. That we ought to get out before the end of January. I am therefore a little leery in being absolutely sure about when we can finish the other work, because we have a limited staff and a limited budget, so we have to be a bit careful about this. But I think this is very important.

Q12 **Anna McMorris:** Moving to enforcement, when the Government consulted over the EU F-gas regulations in 2015, several consultees raised concerns over the level of inspection and enforcement, finding them inadequate. Do you think that the current regulations are enforced properly? For instance, we have not had many projections for non-compliance.

Lord Deben: It is very difficult for me, as Chairman of the Climate Change Committee, to make an assessment of that, because it is not something that I have evidence for, so it is an opinion and not anything beyond that. It must be said that the UK's enforcement programme right across the board has some very big questions about it, from abattoirs right the way through to the way in which we deal with the enforcement of building regulations. I have had to have some comments about that, for example, because you have type agreements, but nobody seems to check that a building has met those type agreements. Right across the board it seems to me that we will need to rethink the way in which we go in for enforcement.

In this particular area, it is a very easy area to exclude yourself from the enforcement. It is not an easy thing to do, this enforcement, and I do not think we have that right. It is easy at the point at which new stuff comes on to the market to regulate proper channels, because then you do have to get your licence and the rest of it and you can do that. It is a very difficult thing to do, and again I am not sure that enough thought has gone in. The only thing I can say is that I have not seen any evidence of serious thinking about how you might improve the enforcement or how you might check that the enforcement is working.

Q13 **Anna McMorris:** You seem to be saying that there may be loopholes in



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the current system.

Lord Deben: I am very keen on evidence. I do not have sufficient evidence to go as far as that. There is clear evidence that no one from the Ministry has been looking at this in detail to see whether they have it right and then been able to show that they have it right. Those two things lead one to suspect that it may be easier to avoid it.

Q14 **Anna McMorris:** Do you think the current reporting procedures are rigorous enough to track progress?

Lord Deben: I think they could be, but it is really for a Committee such as this to look and see whether it is, because I have no evidence about how rigorous they are or how often they are looked at. One of the things about reporting is that you want to make sure that people read the report, so to speak, and check back. I do not know what the evidence for that is.

Q15 **Anna McMorris:** Do you think the Government's proposals to allow enforcement authorities such as the Environment Agency and NRW to issue civil penalties will help deter non-compliance with F-gas regulations?

Lord Deben: I think there is a general view in the industry that this is not a terribly important matter, and therefore tougher penalties that show that it is an important matter seem to me to be a sensible move.

Q16 **Anna McMorris:** Will it heighten importance?

Lord Deben: This is one of those things where people do not understand—we have not made people understand—that contributing to climate change is a very damaging thing. It is something we should see as a damaging thing to the community. In that sense, we know that there are certain sorts of things that you do that are breaking the law that you do not really think are too bad. This is bad because this is damaging the community. We never got that kind of feeling over, even to the Government Departments that are supposedly enforcing these things. We just have to get a much tougher view: "If you are doing this, you are damaging the future of your children. This is serious."

Q17 **Anna McMorris:** High-profile criminal proceedings would do that.

Lord Deben: Exactly.

Q18 **Anna McMorris:** Therefore, I would imagine you will be saying that more resources are required in order to do this.

Lord Deben: I am leery of saying that it needs more resources. It needs to be successful and it is for the Government to decide what resources they need to do that. I am conscious of the distinction between my role and the role of the Government—careful.

Q19 **Dr Matthew Offord:** We wanted to know your opinion particularly on whether the UK should remain part of the HFC quota system.



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Lord Deben: My opinion is that the UK should remain in a position in which it could not remove itself from that. That is the first thing. In other words, I wanted to work in a way that means that we help to raise the standards of everybody else. That is what I wanted to do. I wanted to be in a position to do that and I think that is very important. If it is not in that position, then I want the UK to be a leader. If being a leader means that it has to do differently from that, then that is an important thing.

Q20 **Dr Matthew Offord:** I have just two things from that. When you say “in a position,” we are leaving the EU. There is no doubt about that.

Lord Deben: I believe “if we leave the EU”. That is my view. It is my view because I think it is so damaging that it seems to me that sometimes some people understand that. Do not ask me to say anything other than that.

Q21 **Dr Matthew Offord:** That is fine. I accept that is your opinion, but you are factually wrong, because we are leaving.

Lord Deben: You can never be factually wrong about the future.

Dr Matthew Offord: I will come back to you when we do leave and say, “We have now left.”

Chair: To be continued, I think.

Q22 **Dr Matthew Offord:** I just like to establish these facts. What about the UK setting up our own system then? What do you think about that?

Lord Deben: If we were to leave the European Union, we should set up a system that phases out these gases as rapidly as possible and not merely carry on as if we were a member of the European Union. That is of course one of the fundamentals that arise. If you make the argument, “It is convenient to carry on in this way because other people are doing it,” what you are then admitting is that you are not a member of the European Union, you have no say in those agreements, you are not going to be able to improve them, but you are stuck with the ones that you have. If you believe it is a good idea to leave the European Union—and there are some who do—then I think you have to say that you want a tougher regime and that you want Britain to lead the world to go faster towards the removal of these gases in order to set the example for other people, as we can no longer share in the decisions.

Q23 **Dr Matthew Offord:** This is where it becomes interesting with our views on whether we are leaving the European Union. If the UK has its own separate system, do you think there will be complications between the EU system and the UK system?

Lord Deben: Of course, and that is why it is much better to do it together than go down together. This will be true about a lot of other things, and some of them will be even more important than this.

Q24 **Dr Matthew Offord:** If the UK does have its own system—there, I have some way moved towards your position; I have accepted what you have



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said—who do you think will be the best body to enforce that? Would it be the Environment Agency, for example?

Lord Deben: Were we to leave the European Union, one of the big issues that we have to decide on is how we replicate some kind of independence on a whole range of these things. I see that Mr Gove has made some suggestions as to what one might do. My own view is that there have been seriously bad changes in the Environment Agency, because when I set it up—I am sorry to have to say that, but I am so old that I did set it up—I set it up as an independent agency and gave the instructions that it should not be frightened of disagreeing with the Government and pointing out where the Government got it wrong. Successive Governments have reduced the ability of the Environment Agency to behave in that way. It has become much closer to the Government.

I think that is bad and that the Environment Agency should be very much more independent. Whatever happens, I would hope that we would see a very much more independent Environment Agency. That is very good for Ministers, because if you have an independent agency, Ministers are able to call it in evidence when they are dealing with their fellow Ministers in Cabinet, which is not always easy because they are not always on your side on these matters. It is quite good to have that independence.

Who should do it? I think that will have to be answered when we have decided what kind of top, independent level of appeal, if you like, we are going to have were we to leave the European Union.

Dr Matthew Offord: I have to say, while our views on the European Union may not agree, I am very grateful for the work you have done when you were Environment Secretary, and I thank you for all that.

Chair: Thank you. Joan, we are going to go a bit deeper on enforcement.

Q25 **Joan Ryan:** I guess from what you have said, Lord Deben, you would be as concerned as I would be about the absence of the European Commission and the ECJ if and when the UK leaves the EU in terms of enforcing compliance. I think that is clear from the answers you gave to my colleague.

Lord Deben: Absolutely.

Q26 **Joan Ryan:** Do you think that the Environment Agency and other relevant bodies would be in any way equipped or even resourced to take on that role?

Lord Deben: It is certainly not resourced, in the sense that it has never been resourced. I am trying very hard not to incur Dr Offord's wrath, but one of the fundamental issues about leaving the European Union is that a whole lot of things that you have to do you cease to do together and you have to do on your own. That is, first of all, very expensive, and secondly, it demands resources that we have never had to put in that direction. From testing your own ladders, right the way through to the issues we are talking about now, you have to have these things in place.



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I have a serious worry that this country has not been good at doing that kind of thing, and as we will be economically very much weakened by this, there will not be the money to do all the things we want to do.

What will be the things that people will try to skimp on? It will be these things. I have a very considerable concern that this is a real issue, not an issue of party politics or indeed an issue of Brexit. This is a real issue about how Britain sees itself. The Climate Change Committee is going to have to be very clear about this, because we have a statutory requirement to ensure that the Government meets the targets that have been passed by Parliament. That is our role. Meeting those targets does demand the kind of independence of judgment that the Climate Change Committee gives.

Beyond those targets, there are a whole lot of environmental steps that have to be taken and need to be taken, and I do not see how you can safely leave those in the hands of just a Government and just a Government Department. It seems to me that there has to be some kind of exterior place to go to. You have to pay for it and that is a real cost and you have to have real resources. The Environment Agency might well be able in a different guise to carry that through, but it would have to have resource of both people and money.

Q27 Joan Ryan: Indeed, UKELA have expressed similar concerns to those you express and there is quite a strong lobby in this country against strengthening the requirements and against sanctions. I am thinking of the Federation of Environmental Trade Associations. They contend that the current regime is in itself extremely challenging. ACRIB say it will potentially put UK businesses at a more serious competitive disadvantage. They are already gearing up to make sure that we do not in any way make the situation any better, I would contend.

Lord Deben: There are always those in society who advocate the race to the bottom. They usually use the argument that it makes us uncompetitive. We watch this very carefully and the Climate Change Committee has produced a very clear report showing that there is no evidence whatsoever that the present regulations we have, some of which are tougher than our neighbours, have meant that people have left this country or not come to this country. There is no evidence of that sort.

The second thing is that I do not think these people who attack better regulation and tougher stances realise what is happening in the world. The world is changing. The world is recognising that we ought to have a real global battle against a global threat. Since Paris has happened, of course it will not all come together, of course there will be failings, of course some years it will be less good than others. All that might happen, but Paris has shown us a very direct route and the route we will be on.

If you want to make money, businesses should be ahead of the trend rather than behind it. If we put in place regulations that encourage that,



it seems to me that that will be beneficial to us. Particularly as we will be scrabbling around the world trying to find places to sell our products, we had better make them better than other people's products. Therefore I do not find it at all attractive that people will suggest that we should get rid of these regulations, because otherwise we will be down the chlorinated chicken well. That is what we will do.

Q28 Chair: Can I take you back to the quota side of things? We sell our fluorinated products through the EU quota system. That is complicated, but there have been rows, have there not, with Australia and Canada, and I think America, about the trade quotas? There is a view of the UK Government that for these trade quotas we just chop out one twenty-seventh or whatever it is by GDP and then we can buy and sell freely. That is not being agreed either by the other EU 27 or by the third countries that we hope to sell into. There is a range of possible outcomes, but have you given any thought to establishing a separate UK F-gas quota system?

Lord Deben: We have not done that because we have not done the work that we need to do in order to see what the programme will be. We are only doing that work because we had hoped that the Government would have reacted to our advice and done the work itself. They have not, so that is why we are going to have to do it. When we have done it, I think I will have a better answer to that. It is an important issue about trade, because I have done the negotiations on behalf of the European Union for trading, particularly in agriculture. I spent a year doing it, for odd reasons. I had two six-month periods.

The most difficult thing in that trade is keeping standards up. If you are trying to negotiate, as I did with the United States, the United States does not agree that we should be able to say what the standards of the things that they sell to us are, even to the point of saying what the level of the abattoirs should be. They do not see that we are the purchasers. If it is a question of a trade deal, you have to accept that the United States does not go in for accepting higher standards on the other side, which they see as a trading block. It has been longstanding; it is not just Mr Trump. It has always been true. That is why we have never been able to get a sensible deal with the United States on a whole range of these things, because they do not accept that attitude towards trade that we do, which is about having basic minimum standards that you have to reach.

My concern is that in the big wide world we will find that the pressure will be for us not to improve our standards but, as Joan Ryan said, to lower them. We are going to have to be very tough. It is not going to be easy. They are real battles and we do not have the allies that we have had within the European Union, were we to leave it.

Q29 Chair: Obviously a separate quota system puts the duplication on businesses in this country as well, does it not, because there will be two regimes to comply with?



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Lord Deben: I cannot but agree, but it is one of those things that those people who are bent on promoting divorce have to understand. That is one of the costs—not the worst cost by any means, but one of the costs.

Chair: We are going to move to devolution with John.

Q30 **John McNally:** Lord Deben, moving on to devolved matters, if we leave the EU I can foresee murky waters coming along. When the Secretary of State appeared before us on 1 November, we had a conversation on the devolved Administrations and the possibility of policy divergence on environmental matters. Basically, he said that the devolved Administrations should do what they need to do and consider appropriate to them, but simultaneously preserve UK-wide rules. He did accept that he could not enforce such an arrangement. In your opinion, what steps do the UK Government need to take to ensure that the UK's F-gas regulatory regime is operable across the whole of the UK?

Lord Deben: As you know, we have a very special relationship with the devolved Governments. We advise the Scottish Government separately from our advice to the UK Government, and similarly with the Welsh Government. We would have a similar position if there were a Northern Irish Government, but that is the way we have it. Indeed, Scotland and Wales both contribute to our Secretariat for the work that we do specifically for them. They have their own rules and regulations and indeed their own climate change Acts in effect in both countries.

The devolved Governments already do a lot of work in the environment space. Indeed, Scotland is doing better than the United Kingdom as a whole overall, and I continue to point that out; it is notable. The Welsh have a number of areas that they are doing better; they are better on waste and they have their generations Act, which is a remarkable effort to try to make today conscious of what we should be doing for the next generation. It is a well-honed piece of legislation.

We work within those things. So far we have found it perfectly possible to create what is an overall United Kingdom budget, which is what we present to Parliament here, without having difficulties between the countries. You can do a great deal. You have to do it by being very clearly the confidant of every part of it. Were you to talk to your leader, I think she would say that we are absolutely in her confidence and she in ours. We work with her in exactly the same way as we work with the Prime Minister and the various Secretaries of State in the United Kingdom Government who are involved. We have to work like that.

I would have thought that it is possible, if the attitude is right, that the countries of the United Kingdom would be able to work together in a way that is joined up, because it needs to be joined up if we are going to win certain battles. I hesitate to say this, but that is why I happen to think that it is much better to work with your neighbours with a joined-up system. If you do not do it with a joined-up system, it is not as good a system. It does not have the same coherence. That is a real issue.



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In the United Kingdom we are learning a bit late some lessons that we ought to have learned in the European Union. We learn that when people have national independence of whatever amount, they want to have some say in what happens in that area, and you need to have a balance between that and what is necessary for the country as a whole. That is a difficult thing, but it is best approached by a determination to find a way.

Q31 John McNally: It is a pleasure to listen to your thoughts and to hear you expressing these thoughts without any fear. I agree entirely with what you say. That brings me to my last point. If the UK-wide rules are not appropriate in a devolved area, in your opinion who is going to be the ultimate decision maker? Where is that power going to rest? Where are the appropriate decisions going to be made?

Lord Deben: I am never a believer in trying to answer hypothetical questions. I mean that; I am not trying to avoid it. I think it is a very difficult thing to answer a hypothetical question of that kind, particularly if you use the word "inappropriate," which does seem to me the most overused word in our English language of all—to me, it is used in almost anything. I am not keen on "inappropriate".

I can imagine circumstances in which the aim would be the same, but the mechanisms of handling and reaching that aim might be more appropriate in one form rather than another. If that is the case, it seems to me that we ought to be grown up enough to be able to find a way to deal with that without saying, "You are in charge and you are not." One side would have to explain to the other and convince the other that the particular way of doing it is the best way. That is what we have done for 40 years in the European Union. That is why it is such a successful operation. Just because we do not like doing it that way does not mean that we are not going to have to do the same thing in the United Kingdom.

Our fault in the United Kingdom was never to think that you had to do it in that way, that you had to work with your neighbours, who are different and have different standards, different approaches and different legal systems. In terms of the United Kingdom, we just have to learn to live like that, because that is the world we are now living in. The world has changed fundamentally. If you have to have global answers to global problems, you have to treat other people as equals. There is no imperialism that you can operate. That is one of the reasons why the kind of language being used at the moment is so damaging, because it talks about the world as if we are important; we are not.

We are only going to solve these problems if we are prepared to negotiate and share with and treat as equals our neighbours. There is no other way of solving any of these big problems. It has become a commercial, political, social and cultural necessity. I would not want to say that Scotland should have the last word or that the UK should have the last word; I want to say that both of us have to grow up and start



understanding that we have to come to an agreement between us, and ditto for our relationships with the rest of the world.

- Q32 **Alex Sobel:** Your Committee's report "Closing the Policy Gap" stressed the importance of finding lower global warming potential alternatives for use, such as the metered-dose inhalers, which you have already mentioned, refrigeration and air conditioning. The HFC phase-down is encouraging this, but do you feel that progress has been fast enough?

Lord Deben: I am the wrong person to ask whether progress is fast enough, because it is never fast enough for me. I tend to want to push it further. It cannot be fast enough, because I do not get that feeling of urgency that I want to see in all these things. We do not have time to do more slowly anything that we can do faster. That is what I am trying to press all the time. Any of the things that we know we have alternatives to, we could easily use those alternatives immediately. I see we are now going to have a lot of money being spent on research and one of the areas that it could be spent on would be immediately to do some further research to replace some of the more dangerous gases to which you referred, Chairman. I just think we have to get on with it.

- Q33 **Alex Sobel:** Taking the example of the inhalers, do you think the Government could issue guidance or guidelines, short of a ban, to say to GPs that in the first instance they had to prescribe the lower GWP inhalers rather than the current inhalers?

Lord Deben: It is not the role of the Climate Change Committee to tell the Government how to do things, so I am not going to be led down that route. I think that the Government should look at the whole range of these gases, get the best advice of the science, take that advice and find the most appropriate way to deal with it. I do not think I could advise the Government on how you do these things, because there is a sensible distinction. We set the budgets out and we give alternative ways of reaching those budgets. It is for Government to decide how to do that and us to measure whether they have done it satisfactorily. That distinction is very important. I know what privately I would do, but it is not up to me to say that.

- Q34 **Alex Sobel:** Let me phrase that differently. Do you think enough is being done in terms of innovation and research to provide the alternatives to the current F-gas use?

Lord Deben: Instinctively it has always seemed to me this is an area where we could eliminate something from our list of global warming factors. I thought that ever since I first started in it, which is, as I say, 19 years ago. That is why we did that work that I declared as an interest. I did that work for Coca-Cola because it seemed to us that that was a real change that could be made and has been made. It was not just saying, "We will move from this to this." It was saying, "We do not want to go on doing this, so we have to find something that replaces it." We did the



research to do that, in company with Greenpeace, as a matter of fact, and did that in order that an alternative should be found.

It seems to me that ought to be much more widely followed by all sorts of other people. I am not just saying that, but that is where it started. That must be possible to do much more widely. If business can do it, I do not think the Government have an excuse.

- Q35 Kerry McCarthy:** Can I just ask about the data reporting or the data collection and the time lag in EU reporting that you mentioned earlier, which seems to be hindering progress? Do you think there is a way that we could, if we were going it alone, speed up the collection of that data and make more progress as a result?

Lord Deben: That will be a major part of what we are looking at. It has been a problem across many areas that we do not have either speedy enough data reporting or properly based data reporting. For example, we have not been able to do the work we would have wanted to do on agriculture because we have not had baselines. DEFRA now are finally producing those baselines, but I refuse to do the work because I do not think the Climate Change Committee should do things where the evidence is not there. All we had was anecdotal evidence. Unless you have a baseline you cannot say, "Farmers are doing this much better." You cannot say that there is this much more fertility in the land. You cannot say any of those things, so you have to get those baselines right.

I am afraid this is another area where we want to look very carefully. This whole issue of measurement is a very essential area, because if you get the measurements wrong then of course all the targeting arrangements and suchlike are thrown into disrepute. That is a very difficult area for us and why we want to make sure that we get that absolutely right.

- Q36 Kerry McCarthy:** You have acknowledged the importance of it, but are there specific things you are doing, that you will be putting in motion to try to improve that?

Lord Deben: We cannot put it into motion because it is not our measurement, so to speak. What we will do is look at how the system is being worked and try to give some advice—which is what our role is—as to how that might improve.

- Q37 Chair:** You started off talking about asthma inhalers and saying there are alternatives—the powder-based alternatives. Given that there are exemptions for these metered-dose inhalers, do you think they should be reconsidered?

Lord Deben: It seems to me that these are issues that ought to be discussed between the industry and the Government. One of the things is that in many areas the industry is willing to do the things that are best, but if you do not ask and do not have those discussions, it does not happen. I have had this long experience with getting parts of industries to make changes that they want to do—which is my professional



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activity—but not finding that there was a reaction from Government to say, “Why don’t we all do this together?”

The launching of the industrial strategy, which I was privileged to be at yesterday, is a very good new start, if we make it work. I think that on an all-party basis we ought to be able to make that kind of way of looking at things work. Chairman, what I would recommend is that this—among a whole lot of other things—should be a matter for Government and industry to work together. I think that the Government would find a real support from much of industry and they would also be able to identify the places where they do not have that support. Then you can do your measures and your regulations much more effectively if you know where the resistance is going to be.

Q38 **Chair:** Are you surprised that this Committee has had no evidence from the NHS on this matter?

Lord Deben: I do not know whether the NHS would consider that this is its role.

Q39 **Chair:** They do have a centre for sustainability.

Lord Deben: Yes, they do, but I am not sure that they would not say that other people have the responsibility for taking the lead in this. It is not for me to make that judgment.

Q40 **Chair:** Thank you. Is there anything that we have not asked you about F-gases that you would like to tell us?

Lord Deben: No, except I would like to return to one thing. There is urgency in solving the problems. We are in the dangerous position of having a very good trajectory in reducing our emissions, but people do not recognise that the reason for that is because of the decarbonisation of the power sector and that that runs out in terms of the trajectory, if I can use mixed metaphors, and we therefore have an urgent need to do a whole range of other things.

The F-gas issue seems to me to be an area where we really can make a difference and, in or out of the European Union, could set an example using what levers we have in order to try to ensure that the rest of the world follows. If we did that, then the growth in HFCs—which is likely to happen because of the improvement in other people’s standards of living, the inability to control in those countries and the rest of it—you stem that, because you have an alternative.

I also think that, in doing that, the Government might well consider that part of their funding of action on climate change outside of this country might well be involved here, because if you can reduce the use of F-gases and ensure that the alternatives that you create are available at a price that means people can buy them, then you can do something worldwide, which would be very well worth doing. The one word I want to put into



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the whole discussion is “urgency.” I hope that we can all press that, not only on Government, but on industry.

Chair: Lord Deben, thank you very much indeed. We will close the session.