



Environmental Audit Committee

House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

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Rt Hon Graham Stuart MP
Minister for Energy Security and Net Zero
Department for Energy Security and Net Zero
1 Victoria Street
London SW1H 0ET

Sent by email only

16th November 2023

Dear Graham,

Thank you for appearing before the Environmental Audit Committee, as well as guest members from the Science, Innovation and Technology Committee and the Energy Security and Net Zero committee, on 8th November. It was very helpful to discuss the UK's priorities for COP28, to be held in Dubai in December 2023.

I hope you found the session to be constructive. Please pass on our thanks to Alison Campbell for her contributions to the session.

I have set out below a number of issues arising from our session on which you either agreed to provide additional information, or where Members felt a further response would be appropriate. I would be grateful if you could respond in writing not later than **29th November 2023**.

Domestic and Economic Affairs (Energy, Climate and Net Zero) Cabinet Committee

We discussed how the Government is monitoring progress against its net zero commitments, including the UK's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC). You told us that the Domestic and Economic Affairs (Energy, Climate and Net Zero) Cabinet Committee "ensures a co-ordinated approach to delivering net zero across Government and receives regular updates on delivery" ([Q17](#)).

We are pleased to hear that this governance structure is in place, but would like to seek reassurance that it is a meaningful forum for engagement between departments and not just a 'tick box' exercise. It would be helpful therefore if you could please set out: (i) how often this Cabinet Committee has met over the last six months; (ii) the attendance at each of these meetings; (iii) the duration of each meeting and (iv) the number of decisions taken by 'write-round' correspondence between such meetings during that period.

2030 Strategic Framework for International Climate and Nature Action

We commend the Government on the publication, in March of this year, of the Strategic Framework for International Climate and Nature Action – a very welcome and much-needed cross-government document which sets out how the UK aims to drive forward international action on climate and nature in an integrated way.

However, while this is a positive development, Barry Gardiner MP noted the view of the Climate Change Committee that the Strategic Framework is lacking in ambition when it comes to making effective use of trade policy to support climate action in the UK and help drive progress abroad ([Q24](#)). This lack of ambition was illustrated in the Government response to the EFRA Committee's Marine Mammals report, published in October 2023, which rejects that committee's recommendation that marine mammal welfare commitments should be embedded into all future trade deals ([Q25](#)), instead insisting that: "All trade deals are different, reflecting consideration of a wide range of policy priorities and are tailored to the relationships and markets of the countries involved." This appears to indicate an approach whereby climate and environment considerations are not given any priority above other factors as opposed to one which seeks to mainstream such considerations, as the Strategic Framework would seem to intend.

You kindly agreed to look at this issue ([Q25](#)). Please set out, in your response to this letter, how the Government is using trade as a lever to support the transition to a climate and nature positive future, as set out in the Strategic Framework, and whether this approach is to be strengthened in light of the above observations.

Land Use Framework and Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction Agreement

Barry Gardiner MP asked when the Government's Land Use Framework (LUF) would be published ([Q26](#)), given its critical role in tying together commitments relating to both UNFCCC COP and UNCBD COP, as the Strategic Framework seeks to do. He also queried whether the UK Government expected to formally ratify the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement – which will help establish large-scale marine protected areas in the two-thirds of the global ocean that lie beyond national jurisdiction – prior to COP28 ([Q27](#)). You responded that you were not aware of the timetables for these but referred to DEFRA being the lead department.

Whilst it is acknowledged that primary responsibility for the LUF and BBNJ does not fall under your department, we would hope and expect you would have some oversight of these given their importance to the UK's COP objectives. We further note that, speaking to the committee as part of its Environmental Change and Food Security inquiry on 12 July 2023, Rt Hon Mark Spencer MP, DEFRA Minister of State (Minister for Food, Farming and Fisheries), said he expected the Government to publish the LUF "this year" ([Q288](#)).

I should be grateful if you could liaise with colleagues in DEFRA and FCDO as appropriate and outline in the response to this letter: (i) when we might expect the LUF to be published; and (ii) whether the BBNJ will be formally ratified prior to the commencement of COP28.

Sustainable cooling

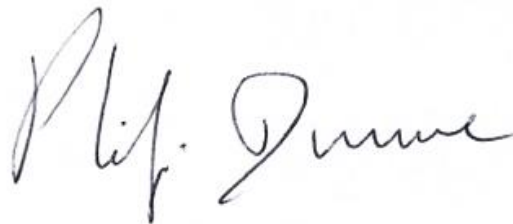
Finally, we welcomed the opportunity to discuss with you matters concerning cooling, given the committee's ongoing inquiry into Heat Resilience and Sustainable Cooling launched in July this year. We heard that a decision is yet to be taken as to whether the UK will sign up to the Global Cooling Pledge (GCP) at COP28 but note your general support for the pledge ([Q29](#)), along with the comment that: "Signing the GCP would not require any new policy commitments as the UK already meets the pledge policy requirements through existing policies" ([Q29](#)).

In response to this letter I should be grateful if you would please list these existing policies and explain how they enable the UK to meet the various requirements of the Global Cooling Pledge.

I expect the Committee will wish to publish this letter, together with the response, once received.

A copy of this letter goes to the Chairs of the Energy Security and Net Zero Committee; the Science, Innovation and Technology Committee; and the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Philip Dunne', written in a cursive style.

Rt Hon Philip Dunne MP
Chairman of the Environmental Audit Committee