



House of Commons

Business, Energy and Industrial
Strategy Committee

**Net Zero and UN
Climate Summits:
Scrutiny of Preparations
for COP26—interim
report: Government
Response to the
Committee’s Third
Report of Session
2019–21**

**Second Special Report of Session
2021–22**

*Ordered by the House of Commons
to be printed 13 May 2021*

HC 120
Published on 17 May 2021
by authority of the House of Commons

Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee

The Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration and policy of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

Current membership

[Darren Jones MP](#) (*Labour, Bristol North West*) (Chair)

[Alan Brown MP](#) (*Scottish National Party, Kilmarnock and Loudoun*)

[Judith Cummins MP](#) (*Labour, Bradford South*)

[Richard Fuller MP](#) (*Conservative, North East Bedfordshire*)

[Ms Nusrat Ghani MP](#) (*Conservative, Wealden*)

[Paul Howell MP](#) (*Conservative, Sedgefield*)

[Mark Jenkinson MP](#) (*Conservative, Workington*)

[Charlotte Nichols MP](#) (*Labour, Warrington North*)

[Sarah Owen MP](#) (*Labour, Luton North*)

[Mark Pawsey MP](#) (*Conservative, Rugby*)

[Alexander Stafford MP](#) (*Conservative, Rother Valley*)

Powers

The Committee is one of the departmental select committees, the powers of which are set out in House of Commons Standing Orders, principally in SO No 152. These are available on the internet via www.parliament.uk.

Publication

© Parliamentary Copyright House of Commons 2021. This publication may be reproduced under the terms of the Open Parliament Licence, which is published at www.parliament.uk/site-information/copyright-parliament/.

Committee reports are published on the Committee's website at www.parliament.uk/beis and in print by Order of the House.

Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Bradley Albrow (Second Clerk), Zereena Arshad (Committee Specialist), Dawn Amey (Committee Operations Manager), Gary Calder (Media Officer), Dr Rebecca Davies (Clerk), Beth Dingley (POST Fellow), John Hitchcock (Committee Specialist), Catherine Kisanji (Inquiry Manager Intern), Dr Matthew Lecznar (Committee Operations Officer), Becky Mawhood (Senior Committee Specialist), and Louise Whitley (Senior Committee Specialist).

Contacts

All correspondence should be addressed to the Clerk of the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA. The telephone number for general enquiries is 020 7219 4494; the Committee's email address is beiscom@parliament.uk

You can follow the Committee on Twitter using [@CommonsBEIS](https://twitter.com/CommonsBEIS)

Second Special Report

On 5 March 2021, the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee published its Third Report of Session 2019–21, [Net zero and UN climate summits: Scrutiny of Preparations for COP26—interim report](#) (HC 1265). The Government’s response was received via correspondence on 21 April 2021. The Government’s response is appended below. The Committee’s conclusions are in bold type. The Committee’s recommendations are in bold italicised type. The Government response is in plain type.

Appendix: Government Response

Preparations for COP26

1. *We welcome the Government’s headline ambitions for COP26 but note that no details have yet been provided on how success will be measured against each of these goals.* (Paragraph 6)
2. *We recommend that the headline ambitions be expanded to a clear list of measures, with a set of criteria attached to each in terms of how success will be measured. We ask that the Government share these details with this Committee in its response to this report.* (Paragraph 6)
3. In the Written Ministerial Statement that was laid in the House on 18 March the Government set out clearly the goals of the UK Presidency for a successful COP26.
 - a) To ask countries to commit to net zero by mid-century, building on the 70% of world GDP covered by net zero targets as of Q2 2021. It is worth noting that when the UK assumed the role of incoming COP Presidency in December 2019, coverage was just 20% of global emissions and 26% of world GDP.
 - b) To set the path to this, countries are being asked to come forward with ambitious 2030 emissions reductions targets (known as NDCs) which align with net zero goals. Internationally, we will also be looking to accelerate the phase-out of coal, encourage investment in renewables, halt fossil fuel subsidies and pick up the pace on electric vehicle roll out. All of these areas are critical to stop average global temperatures exceeding 1.5C.
 - c) To urgently protect and help adapt our communities and natural habitats from the destructive effects of climate change. This will involve enabling and encouraging countries affected by climate change to build defences, warning systems and resilient infrastructure to avoid loss of homes and livelihoods.
 - d) To increase funding to support these aims, making good on the \$100bn annual climate finance goal affirmed through the Paris Agreement. We need to be in a position to unleash the trillions in private and public finance to meet global net zero.
 - e) To close off the outstanding elements of the Paris Rulebook, and accelerate delivery of the Paris Goals through collaboration between governments, businesses and civil society.

4. The delivery of a successful COP26 is a priority for the Prime Minister. Progress is monitored through the Climate Action Strategy Committee which the Prime Minister chairs and the Climate Action Implementation Committee, which the COP President Designate chairs. We are monitoring our progress against our goals by tracking the commitments that are mandated by the Paris Agreement, including long-term strategies, nationally determined contributions, climate finance commitments, adaptation communications and national adaptation plans and tracking the commitments that provide the engine of delivery for the Paris Agreement. These include commitments to phase out coal and coal financing, commitments to phase out the internal combustion engine and national and international commitments to nature.

5. We welcome the assurances from the COP26 President on the level of resourcing that is available to the COP26 Unit. It is vital that, as the largest summit ever organised in the UK and a critical event in the global response to climate change, COP26 is provided the greatest levels of resourcing and is held in highest priority across Government. (Paragraph 10) The success of COP26 is dependent on effective diplomacy. It remains unclear whether the COP26 Unit has been assigned a dedicated diplomatic team, nor the extent to which the diplomatic network is engaged further than having received correspondence from the Foreign and Development Secretary. (Paragraph 11)

6. *We recommend that the COP26 President, alongside the Prime Minister and Foreign and Development Secretary, make it publicly clear that the full force of the British civil service is being appropriately applied to secure the desired outcomes from COP26 this November.* (Paragraph 11)

7. The Government has been clear that the delivery of a successful COP26 is a priority. The COP26 team is supported by the UK's full diplomatic network. The Prime Minister, Foreign Secretary, FCDO ministers, senior officials and our Embassies and High Commissions around the world have all embedded climate into their international engagement.

8. All heads of mission have been instructed by the Foreign Secretary to make delivery of COP26 objectives a top priority and they are supported in their climate work by our overseas network of Climate, Energy and Environment Attachés, the world's first diplomatic network dedicated to this agenda. This overseas network numbers around 462 UK diplomatic staff and Country Based Staff. In addition, we have six regionally focussed COP26 Ambassadors to drive forward diplomatic action on COP26.

9. It is essential that Parliament has sufficient opportunity to question the Government's preparations for the COP26 summit. Opening the process up to scrutiny is key not only to ensure accountability in the planning and preparations to facilitate a successful Presidency, but also to promote public and stakeholder confidence in the work of the COP26 Unit. (Paragraph 14) We welcome the COP26 President's commitment to appear before the Committee. We invite him to confirm his willingness to appear before the Committee on the three occasions set out above, and to provide detail on any other approaches to facilitating Parliamentary scrutiny of COP26 preparations that he intends to take. This approach should be extended to all devolved legislators. (Paragraph 15)

10. We recognise the importance of parliamentary scrutiny and welcome the scrutiny from Parliament through regular Oral Questions and from select committees. The COP26 President has agreed to select committee appearances in line with the proposal from committee chairs. Given his international travel commitments these appearances will be shared with ministerial colleagues and officials.

11. **We welcome the fact that questions to the COP26 President are now included on the regular rota of questions to Government Departments on the floor of the House. We welcome the opportunity to have questioned the COP26 President at the despatch box on 24 February, in his first appearance in this capacity.** (Paragraph 17)

12. *We welcome the COP26 President's engagement with APPGs and his plans to explore the potential for further briefings with these groups, which are a key link between parliamentarians and wider stakeholder groups. However, this should not be considered to be a substitute for public scrutiny by Parliament, which will be key to ensuring transparency and accountability.* (Paragraph 19)

13. *We recommend that the COP26 President work closely with the Leader of the House to align the autumn recess with one of the COP26 weeks in November. We note that the first week of COP26 also coincides with Parliament week and will support any initiative both to maximise the opportunities for Member participation at COP26 and public engagement with the process.* (Paragraph 22)

14. The COP26 President is liaising with colleagues in Government and the Leader of the House will inform the House in due course on recess dates.

15. *The inclusion of backbench Members within the UK's COP26 delegation would widen access to UK parliamentarians on a cross-party basis in the year of the UK's Presidency.* (Paragraph 25)

16. *We recommend that the Government follows the precedent set by previous COP Presidencies, by expanding its delegation and widening access to parliamentarians. We recommend that the COP26 President engage with the Committee and other parliamentarians on the appropriate composition of the delegation and update the Committee as soon as any decision is made. The leaders and relevant ministers of devolved governments should also form part of the UK delegation.* (Paragraph 25)

17. We are still finalising the UK delegation and we will update the House in due course.

18. *We welcome the assurances that public health is a priority for the COP26 Unit, while acknowledging the challenges presented by continuing uncertainties. We recommend that the UK Government engages on this issue constructively with the Scottish Government. The Government should share, in response to this report, the proposed health protection and contingency measures it will put in place in various scenarios relating to the continuing pandemic.* (Paragraph 27)

19. The Government is ensuring that the health of participants and the local community is foremost in our planning for COP26. The excellent joint working between the UK Government, Scottish Government and Scottish Delivery partners is key to all planning, and we will continue to ensure we maintain a close dialogue. We will update the committee once plans are finalised.

20. The proposal for health protection and contingency measures remains in development. We are aware that these measures will need to be communicated in an appropriately timely manner to both the local communities surrounding COP26 and the attendees.

21. *We welcome the stated aim of delivering an in-person summit and agree that this would allow for the most effective engagement with the widest number of countries—particularly those most at risk of climate impacts. However, the Government must also plan for the distinct possibility that large parts of the summit will have to be moved online or downscaled because of prevailing risks from covid-19.* (Paragraph 30)

22. *We recommend it outlines the steps it is taking during planning to make COP26 a success regardless of the format. We further welcome the intention to explore how digital events can increase participation in the summit and request further details as they become available.* (Paragraph 30)

23. We have Delivery Frameworks in place with all Delivery Partners including other Government Departments, Police Scotland and the Scottish Government, which provides a collective and consistent view on delivery governance. This governance will work to ensure successful operational delivery of COP26. We are considering robust contingency plans for the range of COVID-19 scenarios so we can rapidly adapt, if it were to prove necessary.

24. We also continue to engage with UNFCCC on their requirements to ensure COP26 is a success from an operational perspective. This includes consideration of how we can best use technology to support the successful delivery of COP26 while increasing inclusion and sustainability. We will provide further details to Parliament in due course.

25. *We ask that the COP26 President sets out how the conference procedures will be adjusted to reflect the possibility that delegations from certain countries (where, for example, covid vaccination roll out has been slower or where new variants of the covid virus are discovered) may not be able to fully participate physically in the conference; and what steps will be taken to ensure equality of access to the conference between developed nations (where vaccine roll out has been quicker) and some developing nations (where vaccine roll out has been slower). In addition, in the scenario that country delegations are reduced in size, we ask the COP26 President to set out how other important stakeholders—such as city leaders and business leaders—will be invited to take part in proceedings if they are unable to physically be at the conference.* (Paragraph 31)

26. We continue to monitor the COVID situation, including developments on vaccines, and will adapt our plans to adopt the most appropriate preventative measures to respond to the prevailing situation at the time of COP26. We are aware there are groups for whom vaccination is not medically advisable; and that global access to vaccines is not consistent. We will share the details of our COVID mitigation measures with Parliament in due course once they are finalised.

27. The Prime Minister has confirmed that the UK will share the majority of any future excess coronavirus vaccines from our supply with the COVAX international vaccine procurement pool. This is in addition to the £548 million the UK has donated to help developing countries access coronavirus vaccines through COVAX. In our planning we will seek to ensure an inclusive approach.

Legislating for the Sixth Carbon Budget

28. *We welcome the Government's decision to accept the CCC's advice on the level of the UK's updated Nationally Determined Contribution. In the year of the UK's COP26 Presidency this sends the right signal about the Government's commitment to domestic climate policy. However, while we acknowledge the need to fully assess the sixth budget advice, we reiterate the need for the Government to show global leadership by taking decisive action on the UK's domestic ambitions.* (Paragraph 34)

29. *We recommend that the Government commit to accepting the sixth budget advice in full and lay the Statutory Instrument required to give effect to it as early as possible.* (Paragraph 34) *We further encourage the Government to follow the advice of the CCC in engaging with the public and other stakeholders early to ensure that necessarily detailed delivery plans accompany legislative targets in a timely fashion, building in the considerations of Climate Assembly UK.* (Paragraph 35)

30. We are grateful to the CCC for their expert advice, which we will consider in detail ahead of setting the sixth carbon budget in legislation. It is right that we take time to consider the recommendations carefully and in full. We will write to the committee once the timetable for laying the statutory instrument has been agreed.

31. As we develop our plans for reaching net zero emissions by 2050, we will continue to engage the public on the changes that are needed to develop our ambitions on net zero. We will listen very attentively to feedback, including taking into account the recommendations of the Climate Assembly UK and the importance of public engagement with net zero.