



**OFFICIAL REPORT**  
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

# Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee

**Tuesday 5 December 2017**

**Session 5**



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**ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE AND LAND REFORM COMMITTEE**  
**31<sup>st</sup> Meeting 2017, Session 5**

**CONVENER**

\*Graeme Dey (Angus South) (SNP)

**DEPUTY CONVENER**

\*John Scott (Ayr) (Con)

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

- \*Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab)
- \*Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
- \*Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
- \*Kate Forbes (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
- \*Richard Lyle (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
- \*Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (SNP)
- \*Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
- \*Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
- \*David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

\*attended

**THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:**

- Roseanna Cunningham (Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform)
- Yvette Sheppard (Transport Scotland)
- Humza Yousaf (Minister for Transport and the Islands)

**CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE**

Lynn Tullis

**LOCATION**

The Robert Burns Room (CR1)



## Scottish Parliament

### Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee

*Tuesday 5 December 2017*

*[The Convener opened the meeting at 10:30]*

#### Decision on Taking Business in Private

**The Convener (Graeme Dey):** Good morning and welcome to the 31st meeting in 2017 of the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee. I remind everyone present to switch off mobile phones and other electronic devices because they might affect the broadcasting system.

Agenda item 1 is to ask the committee to decide whether to take items 3 and 4 in private. Do members all agree that we will do so?

**Members** *indicated agreement.*

## Air Quality

10:30

**The Convener:** The principal item of business is evidence in the committee's inquiry on air quality in Scotland. We are joined by the Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform, Roseanna Cunningham; the Minister for Transport and the Islands, Humza Yousaf; and Neil Ritchie, from the environmental quality division, and Andrew Taylor, who is an air quality policy manager, both from the Scottish Government. We will be joined later by Yvette Sheppard, who is the environment and sustainability manager at Transport Scotland. She has been detained en route.

Members have a number of questions for the cabinet secretary and the minister. We would appreciate the relevant person responding to the question. Mark Ruskell will kick off.

**Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green):** Good morning everybody. In Scotland, four out of six areas are breaching the European ambient air quality objective. There is a human cost to that: people are dying as a result. Before the summer, how confident were you that Scotland would achieve legal compliance by 2020, and how confident are you now, post the announcement of the programme for government?

**The Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (Roseanna Cunningham):** We are confident. Scotland's air quality already compares well with that of the rest of the United Kingdom and Europe. In some areas, we are already compliant. We are in a relatively good place, and the additional measures in the programme for government will ensure that progress motors on. I do not think that anybody would say that there are not some continuing issues: of course there are. However, we believe that they are manageable, with the right actions.

**Mark Ruskell:** How confident are you that Scotland will meet the air quality objectives by 2020?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** I cannot foresee the future, but I am as confident as I can be that we are on the right track to meet the objectives. A number of things in the programme for government will help considerably in our meeting them. I cannot really say much more than that.

We are keeping things under review all the time. As I suggested, the programme for government has in many cases helped considerably in increasing understanding and awareness. For example, I have been heartened by the extent to which local authorities want to talk about and

engage actively on low-emission zones. That kind of action will make a difference, especially in areas where there continue to be problems.

**Mark Ruskell:** Do you have the same degree of confidence that each of the four areas that are breaching the European Union limits will be sorted by 2020, or are there particular issues with, for example, Glasgow or the north-east?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** I have as much confidence as I can have at this point that we will be able to achieve that. However, the process is a partnership; it involves active engagement by others, including local authorities. As I have indicated, I am already pretty pleased that what is happening in local authorities suggests that they are now much more on top of the debate. Air quality has moved rapidly up the agenda over the past few years. I am glad that we are now able to have a conversation with a variety of partners, with people understanding the seriousness of the issue and the need to do things about it.

We were keen for Glasgow to be the first low-emission zone because of the nature of some of the hot spots in Glasgow. I do not think that anyone would disagree that they had to be tackled first. The City of Edinburgh Council is on board now, and wants very quickly to talk about some of the city's issues. There are specific sets of issues in all the different areas.

I can relate the situation only to when I was last doing this job. My recollection of 2009 to 2011 is that tackling air quality was not in the same place on the agenda as it is today. We have moved on enormously since then: there has been enormous improvement, and there is more to come. I am as confident as I can be that we will be compliant by 2020.

However, I cannot make a promise and I do not have a crystal ball; I do not know what might happen in the meantime. Things might rapidly get much better, given some of the actions that we are already taking. There continues to be a degree of uncertainty. All the Government can do at the moment is get ourselves in the right place, start taking the right actions and ensure that everybody is on board. That is how we will make the difference.

**Mark Ruskell:** You talked about the agenda moving rapidly. "Cleaner Air for Scotland: The Road to a Healthier Future" was produced in 2015. In the light of the new commitments in the programme for government and the UK Supreme Court's judgment on the adequacy of UK plans, including our plan, is now the right time to review the clean air strategy?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** The judgment was not specifically about what is happening in Scotland. We are keeping the clean air for

Scotland strategy under constant review. The expectation is that beyond 2020 we will completely refresh the strategy: we do not regard the strategy as a static document, so ensuring that it is up to date is a constant concern. Some things have changed: for example, the understanding of the impact of poor air quality on public health. That impact has become more widely accepted and understood than it was even five years ago.

**Mark Ruskell:** Some of the actions in chapter 14 of "Cleaner Air for Scotland: The Road to a Healthier Future" will be updated because they interrelate with the programme for government. Are all the actions being delivered? A number of them relate to transport. Are there the budget and the time to deliver them?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** A lot of the actions will have been delivered already—I am looking at Neil Ritchie—and a number are being delivered. The programme for government has quite a big impact on a lot of them, so we continue to keep them under review. Humza Yousaf might want to talk about the transport actions. In a sense, the actions are the checklist that we look at all the time.

**The Convener:** Is any part of the checklist causing concern?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** There is nothing specific causing concern. Having looked at this year's figures, we need to see whether we can deal with particular reasons for the figures. The creation of low-emission zones is one of the actions that we are moving on and which will have an impact. Everybody knows that there has been a much bigger and more focused discussion on the issue than there would have been a year or 18 months ago. That important action will move forward quite a lot of specific items on the checklist. As I have indicated, 2020 is when we want to re-examine the strategy and consider whether a more wholesale update might be required. 2020 is, of course, when we expect to see low-emission zones in the four main Scottish cities, so it will be a useful point at which to look again at the strategy.

**The Convener:** Does the minister want to respond to Mr Ruskell's question?

**The Minister for Transport and the Islands (Humza Yousaf):** In the interests of brevity, I will simply re-emphasise the cabinet secretary's point. A lot of the measures that the Government is taking forward rely on collaboration with local authorities. We are in control of some elements, but it is clear that the pace at which local authorities can move is not within our control. A number of factors will depend on them—that is the caveat. However, close collaboration with local

authorities and other partners will make the process a lot easier.

I do not have any major concerns. I am optimistic about the engagement of local authorities on low-emission zones and about our ambitious plans for the introduction of electric and low-emission vehicles. I am sure that we will talk more about those in committee meetings.

**Roseanna Cunningham:** I should have added that, when I spoke about a review of CAFS, I meant that there will be a formal substantive review, and not simply a refresh.

**Mark Ruskell:** The minister has raised the issue of collaboration; I notice in chapter 14 of the strategy that there is a table with a column headed "Funding", in which there are ticks, asterisks and dashes. Do the dashes indicate areas that rely on partnership funding and commitment from other partners, and so have more of a question mark over delivery, or have I read that wrong? [*Interruption.*]

**Humza Yousaf:** While the cabinet secretary is blowing her nose, I will answer that question with regard to low-emission zones. Each action will have a funding mechanism and agreements and so on.

In our conversations with local authorities, we expect each authority to put up funding. There is clearly an expectation that the Government will also provide funding. The conversations about actions are honest and frank. The budget is less than 10 days away: that will give more clarity.

Some internal work on milestones and the funding associated with them is going on for some actions, such as our plans to phase out new petrol and diesel cars and vans by the end of 2032. Some of those funds will come from the Government, but there will be a lot of partnership working. Members are more than aware of our ambitious vision for active travel, for which we have doubled the budget. The community links and community links plus schemes are done through a matched-funding process with local authorities. Some of that work will be collaborative, and that does not cause me any concern. The conversations are going in a positive direction, from a transport perspective.

**Mark Ruskell:** Spend on clean air zones in England and Wales has increased, I think, so Scotland should be due some consequential moneys. Has that been discussed in Cabinet meetings? Will that consequential money be ring fenced for work on air quality in Scotland—if and when the money arrives?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** You would not expect me to disclose aspects of the budget before budget day. I can confirm that budgetary matters

are under constant discussion at Cabinet meetings: indeed, the Cabinet is this morning discussing the budget, among other things.

**Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP):** Will we meet our 2020 targets if the current plans of the Government and local authorities are executed as planned? I want to be absolutely clear about that.

**Roseanna Cunningham:** That is exactly what the plans are designed to do, as I understand it.

**Stewart Stevenson:** Thank you. That answer is fine.

10:45

**The Convener:** Let us move on. I call Kate Forbes.

**Kate Forbes (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP):** I have a few questions about policy integration at Scotland, UK and EU levels. Most of the evidence that we have taken suggests that Scottish policy on the matter is well integrated with UK and EU approaches, but there are still differences in the approaches. How can we improve both assessment of the transboundary impact of air pollution and how we tackle it?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** Transboundary measurement is quite difficult. I know that I am stating the obvious, but air has no boundary. I have not had a briefing on our geography, but I think that it is fair to say that, geographically speaking, Scotland is in a good place with regard to dealing with transboundary issues. We might not be saying that if we were sitting in Cardiff, discussing the Welsh boundary. The issue would be very different. However, I guess that that is more about localised air quality issues, which are not such big problems.

I do not know the right terminology, but I point out that part of our air monitoring quality system looks at issues such as volcanic action. Clearly, there is absolutely nothing that we can do about air quality problems that arise from a volcanic eruption in, say, Iceland. There are transboundary issues that are manageable and others that are not particularly manageable. For us, the trick is to ensure that we do what we can on the manageable issues. However, as I said, our border gives us a bit of an advantage because we are not dealing with massive air quality problems on either side of it.

As I have pointed out, we are in a pretty good place with the EU directive, which is pan-European. However, I understand that there is a bit of a difference between measurements under the directive and how we measure at local authority level. There is also a boundary issue with regard to local authorities. People tend to think of

transboundary matters as referring to national boundaries, but there are also local authority boundaries, and the extent to which they are taken into account will depend entirely on how well neighbouring local authorities are working across their boundaries on the issues.

**Humza Yousaf:** I have nothing more to add, unless Kate Forbes has a specifically transport-related question.

**Kate Forbes:** That is fine—I will move on. A question about Brexit springs from that, but I will leave that for my colleague David Stewart to ask.

Aberdeen City Council has said:

“the legal status of the standards and objectives within the Scottish regulations and the EU statutory duties can be confusing to the public, businesses such as bus operators and road haulage companies and other stakeholders.”

First of all, do you think that adequate resources are being directed towards guidance and information for the public, businesses and other stakeholders? Secondly—and this question is perhaps more for the minister—which are the most difficult sectors to influence positively with regard to air pollution? Is it bus providers, freight or private vehicles?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** As you would expect me to say, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency plays a significant role in overall guidance, and a number of real opportunities arise from its ability to help local authorities with modelling.

I have already mentioned the slight differences in what is being measured at the EU and domestic levels and in the way that it is being measured. That is partly because we have set a higher standard; for example, Scotland has gone further on particulate matter than is indicated in the EU directive, but I hope that people are happy and are not disappointed that we have done that. There are slightly different requirements, but I guess that you are right to ask about how well understood that is beyond those with a professional interest in the matter. I imagine that there are levels of understanding, and from my perspective—I will let Humza Yousaf deal with some of the specific sectors involved—the biggest challenge is to get the issue across to the wider public who do not necessarily relate their actions to the problem. They might have a real concern about the problem, but they are not necessarily connecting the two issues, and as I have said, I think that persuading the wider public that they have a role to play here is probably one of the biggest challenges that we face.

I hope that this runs across local authorities, too, because people in local areas relate very locally to the kinds of local problems that Mark Ruskell has flagged up, and we should be able to have proper conversations with the broader public about how

we manage them. I suspect that the move to low-emission zones will help generate a far better conversation about what is needed.

**Humza Yousaf:** I entirely agree. Taking a step back, I have to say that I have been heartened by the approach that local authorities of all political colours have taken to tackling this problem. Indeed, there has been something of a welcome competitive edge between some of the cities with regard to low-emission zones; I know that there is always something of a competitive edge between Glasgow and Edinburgh, but the determination to be more ambitious than the others on low-emission zones is to be welcomed and is certainly not, as the cabinet secretary has said, something that we would have seen five or maybe even three years ago. As I have said, I am heartened by that shift in the discourse between policy makers at Scottish Government and local government levels and, from what I have heard, the UK Government is also moving in a certain direction.

I also entirely agree with the cabinet secretary that our biggest challenge is how we take the public with us. Frankly, one of the biggest issues is the private motor car. For example, the centre of my home city of Glasgow has 12,000 cheap car-parking spaces; if I were to park on the fourth floor of the Buchanan Galleries car park, I could almost, if I wanted to, drive my car right up to a till in John Lewis, and the cost would be almost the same as that of an all-day bus ticket on a Sunday.

There are challenges that we have to tackle, but the cabinet secretary is absolutely correct to say that low-emission zones are a step in the right direction. I am not suggesting that the 12,000 car-parking spaces in Glasgow city centre will be removed; I am simply saying that, given the ease with which people can access the city centre or get from A to B in their private vehicles at the time of their choosing, if you put in place any restrictions through introducing low-emission zones or any other measure, you must ensure that the public transport system is absolutely fit for purpose. Moreover, any such move must be aligned not only with improved access to public transport but with an easier transition to, say, electric vehicles through incentivising the purchase or leasing of electric or ultra-low-emission vehicles.

Changing the public's behaviour will be a challenge, but we have to get the narrative right. After all, the cabinet secretary is right: people are very supportive of doing things to improve air quality. Again, as a Glaswegian, I know that many people in my constituency will say that they can almost taste the difference in the air in Hope Street or Union Street. You just have to walk along those streets to realise that there is an air quality issue. There is real public understanding that we



have to do something. However, the link between that and the action that needs to be taken has not yet been made. There is a power of work to be done by not only the Government but our partners in local authorities and others.

Things are changing. However, it will take political courage at both local and national levels to introduce those measures to tackle air quality.

**The Convener:** The question touched on specific sectors. Some time ago, Glasgow City Council introduced an incentive scheme for retrofitting buses, but it had zero take-up. Does that cause you some concern, given that we are discussing an area where we need to incentivise the bus companies to green their fleets?

**Humza Yousaf:** It does not cause me concern because, to re-emphasise what the cabinet secretary has said previously, the discourse has moved on nationally. When I talk to bus operators, such as Lothian Buses, McGill's, First Bus, Stagecoach or the smaller players, I hear that all of them are greening their fleets in some way. Some of them are doing it with our help from the green bus fund and others are doing it off their own back by spending their own money and profits. Many of the bus companies are interested in some sort of retrofitting scheme and have already put some money towards that. However, other companies have said that rather than have a retrofitting scheme, they would prefer to have help with subsidising the cost of Euro 6 or even fully electric buses. There are different solutions for different companies.

Our fund will be well used—indeed, the green bus fund already is. I have the exact figures here somewhere. We have helped to green more than 360 vehicles to date. We have had good take-up of the green bus fund, so I do not doubt that a retrofitting abatement fund would be well used. The exact figures are: 362 buses through the Scottish green bus fund to the amount of £16.2 million.

**Stewart Stevenson:** My question is for the Minister for Transport and the Islands. Following the eruption of Eyjafjallajökull in Iceland, there was huge disruption to air services, particularly to our lifeline services to the islands and Campbeltown which, because they have a low number of passengers, were low down the priority list for mitigation. Are the UK Government and the airlines better prepared for a similar eruption—in any part of the world—that might affect things in the future?

**Humza Yousaf:** The member is right that we have to learn from all such incidents and make our strategies more robust. As he knows only too well, the difficulty that we face when it comes to the lifeline air services to our islands is the need to

invest in the fleet, which contains several ageing planes. There is a budgetary pressure. However, other things can be done.

The constitutional context is that aviation regulations are still reserved to the UK Government. We have a good working relationship with the Department for Transport on that and we will continue to work with it.

We must continue to look at how we make our services more robust in light of recent incidents. We will continue to do that in conjunction with the airlines and our partners in the UK Government.

**Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** On the back of Kate Forbes's question, I would like to return to the issue of collaboration between local authorities. I am sure that the cabinet secretary is alive to the issue, which is one of the biggest challenges that we face. How do we ensure consistency of approach between local authorities to cover, for example, the bus that leaves East Kilbride for Edinburgh and crosses several local authority boundaries? I acknowledge the challenges, but do you have any further observations about how those relationships can be managed?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** That sounds more like a question for the transport minister, because it is really about the integration of timetables.

11:00

**Humza Yousaf:** Yes, I can speak to that. There is no magic wand—if we had one we would use it—to create complete alignment between the Scottish Government's ambitions and vision and local government's actions and vision. However, since the local elections in May, we now have an opportunity to better align them. There are a number of new administrations, many of those that have continued with the same political leadership have appointed new elected members as transport spokespeople, and in many administrations those new appointments are coupled with long-serving chief operating officers of transport at official level.

Just a few weeks ago, I co-hosted an event in Edinburgh with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, in which we brought together those transport spokespeople—the elected members—and the officials, along with regional transport partnership chairs and other stakeholders from the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers and the Society of Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland. We had a really frank and honest discussion about the Government's ambitions for transport, including decarbonising transport, active travel and a few other things, and we heard from those people about what they thought the challenges were, whether on funding, other mechanisms, the scale

of the ambition, guidelines, traffic regulation orders—you name it. It was a really frank and robust conversation, and if we have more of those conversations, we will be better aligned.

The cabinet secretary chairs a steering group for the four cities in relation to low-emission zones. Those kinds of forums—and opportunities to speak frankly in a private space as well—are incredibly helpful to ensuring that we are aligned. There is no magic wand that will ensure that local government and the Scottish Government are 100 per cent aligned. However, as I have already said, I am extremely heartened, optimistic and positive about what I have heard thus far. Glasgow's connectivity commission is an example that gives me further reason to be optimistic.

**Donald Cameron:** Can I ask about a different element of the joined-up approach? In evidence from one local authority we heard that it believed that there was a disconnect between policies directed towards local authorities on the one hand and those directed towards infrastructure, which is a responsibility of Transport Scotland, on the other. Are you content that policies are being consistently delivered to address that kind of problem?

**Humza Yousaf:** I am not sure that I entirely understand the tenor of the question; I will look at the transcript to get a bit more detail. We certainly know where our responsibilities are in terms of infrastructure and where local government's responsibilities lie. Where there is the ability to collaborate—on roads or maintenance, for example—we will have a conversation or forum with local authorities and Transport Scotland on that part of the infrastructure. If I take low-emission zones as an example again, there is an understanding in local authorities that the Government will have to step in and assist when it comes to the infrastructure, although LEZs will be on local roads.

There will always be some tensions with local authorities on transport, between their desires and ambitions and our budgetary constraints and the processes within which we work. However, I am not aware of many tensions and contradictions. If you furnish me with more details I can perhaps give a more specific answer.

**Richard Lyle (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP):** Good morning. I know that the question that I am going to ask does not come under your remit, but it does affect air quality. With regard to planning applications, previous witnesses have been asked whether there are any examples of SEPA or Transport Scotland having stepped in on a local planning development plan to request that a specific development be removed on the ground of the impact that it would have on air quality. They said, no. Do you believe that planners should

evaluate the cumulative impact of emissions and develop spatial plans that reduce human exposure, and what work do you believe the Royal Town Planning Institute should be doing to ensure that local strategic development plans are compliant with CAFS, especially when applications are now being proposed for local incinerators?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** As the member knows, neither the minister nor I is responsible for Scotland's planning system. From the perspective of my portfolio, I not only hope but expect that environmental, climate change and air quality considerations will be fully taken on board in planning decisions. However, I am not in a position to give the committee a long list of planning decisions in which that might have happened or in which people feel that it should have happened but did not.

I expect that all those issues—not just air quality but environmental priorities and climate change—should be part and parcel of what planning authorities now consider. I am afraid that I cannot answer on the extent to which the RTPI is or is not issuing professional guidance on that. I can either try to find a more detailed response for you or pass the query to the Minister for Local Government and Housing, who I understand is giving a statement on planning policy this afternoon.

I appreciate that planning considerations can be extremely important. We look for an understanding of the need for green infrastructure, for example, and for planning authorities to think about all of those matters in design. My particular concern is to ensure that when new housing developments are put in place, an understanding of transport issues is part and parcel of that. However, it is not for my portfolio to deal with day-to-day planning issues.

**Richard Lyle:** I said right at the start of my question that planning is not in your portfolio but, at the end of the day, air quality is and, sometimes, planning can affect it. What is your view of suggestions that there is

“a lack of examples of intervention”—[*Official Report, Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee, 7 November 2017; c 20.*]

in development decisions that may impact on air quality, whether by SEPA, Transport Scotland or local authorities?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** I am sorry, but I cannot answer that question if I do not have an idea of what you are talking about in particular areas. I would need to go away and examine a particular planning decision. If there are particular ones that are of concern, I am happy for them to be flagged up and we can go away and examine them depending on the issue that is concerning

people and come back with some kind of response. However, I am not in a position to talk in general terms about planning.

**Richard Lyle:** There is an example on which the Minister for Transport and the Islands could perhaps give an answer. I will rephrase the question that I was going to ask.

If there is a planning application for a multiple housing development but there is no public transport—buses, for example—so everyone will jump in their car and the air pollution will shoot up, should we ask local providers to move their transport routes to take in that housing development? Would that improve air quality?

**Humza Yousaf:** I will answer in general terms and I appreciate the member's asking the question in general terms.

Obviously, local authorities have local air quality management plans and strategies, particularly in air quality management areas. Therefore, there are already guidelines that they should follow and measures that they should take to ensure that they do not significantly worsen any air quality issues.

I have had a good number of conversations with Kevin Stewart, the minister who is implementing the planning review—the member will be heartened to know that there is cross-Government working on the review. One of the general criticisms that people have had as I have travelled round, visiting local authorities or even RTPs and speaking to communities, is that there is not enough consideration of transport matters in large developments, not only from an air quality perspective but from a traffic management perspective. At this stage, all I can do is reassure the member that we are speaking closely to the minister who is in charge of the review and hoping for a tightening up of some of the measures on, and expectations around, transport.

There is obviously a very fine line—as I know the member appreciates, having been in local government for many years—between setting appropriate national guidelines and meeting expectations and, at the same time, allowing flexibility at a local level because local authorities know best. Many such issues should be covered at the pre-application stage or during the environmental impact assessment, so there are already measures in place.

I appreciate the tone in which the member asked whether more can or should be done. I am not speaking for Mr Stewart, but I think that we both recognise that that is why we are doing a planning review.

**Roseanna Cunningham:** I would like to add to that, because it goes back to what we were talking about earlier. I cannot remember who asked the

question, but it was about areas where more work needs to be done, and one area that is particularly relevant is public engagement. We need to get the public to engage more actively when local authorities are doing their local development plans, because local authorities frequently set up meetings that are not well attended, or people do not register what is in the plan, and then when an application goes in and is agreed, there is a bit of a hoo-hah because folk have not really engaged with the process. There are some real issues about public engagement at an early stage—and the local development plan is that stage. We still have difficulty in engaging the public at that level.

**The Convener:** On the point about conversations with other ministers, presumably you would be quite delighted if a requirement of all planning consents for new-build housing was the inclusion of electric charging points, whether in standalone houses or in flats. Are those conversations going on?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** I can state that, absolutely, those conversations are going on. I know that for a fact because I have been chewing Kevin Stewart's ear for a considerable time about a range of issues that include the one that you raise.

I know that we have not got to the Brexit question, but I am aware that in 2019 the European Union intends to bring forward a directive that seeks to ensure that no new build, whether domestic or commercial, proceeds without electric vehicle charging as a basic standard. I raised the matter with Kevin Stewart some time ago and, notwithstanding the fact that the directive could be coming in post-Brexit, it could be the kind of issue that we would want to do something about anyway.

I have those conversations with Kevin Stewart all the time and I would not be at all surprised if Humza Yousaf was having the same conversations with him, too. We are well aware that planning considerations, whether of the kind that Richard Lyle has raised or potential future planning considerations, are important in this debate.

**Mark Ruskell:** To follow on from Mr Lyle's question, there are local development plans but there are also local transport strategies, and there are concerns about the number of capital projects, some of which may have been devised in a different context, when we were less concerned about or aware of air quality issues. There are also issues around the democratic deficit and, perhaps, some of the assumptions that are built into local transport strategies. To what extent is there proof checking of local transport strategies for air quality issues?

**Humza Yousaf:** I will come back to the member on the specifics, but it is not a case of proofing local transport strategies; we are trying to get alignment.

Mark Ruskell will probably be aware that a review of the national transport strategy is being carried out as we talk, involving 60 stakeholders and numerous working groups, and COSLA and the local authorities are key to that conversation. In fact, COSLA representatives co-chair many of the working groups and sit alongside me on the partnership board. The purpose is to ensure that there is integration with our national transport vision for the next 20 years and that that filters through to local authorities when they are revising their transport strategies. The member makes a point about local authorities doing a constant check of their transport strategies to ensure that they are cognisant of and take account of environmental issues. That is a good thing, but I hope that the national transport strategy review, in which COSLA is ingrained as part of the process, will have an effect locally.

**Mark Ruskell:** Would you reject a local transport strategy if it predicted levels of traffic growth that were out of line with the national transport strategy?

11:15

**Humza Yousaf:** As the member knows, we do not predicate our approach on increasing traffic, and that applies to projects such as the Queensferry crossing or smaller infrastructure projects. It would certainly give me concern if local transport strategies were predicated on increasing the number of car journeys.

**The Convener:** We have raised the B word, so we had better explore that issue.

**David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):** The cabinet secretary has partially covered my question, but I want to look ahead to post-Brexit Scotland, in which we could decide to adopt new environmental directives that come from Europe. Can the cabinet secretary see a scenario in which that is part of an agreement, on the basis that the 27 countries have immense expertise on the environment? I do not take away from the immense expertise that we have in Scotland, but there is clearly a scale issue. As you know, the committee is fresh from coming back from Brussels. I think that the jargon that is used is "equivalence". Do you see a scenario in which we follow new environmental directives that put stricter limits on emissions in Scotland?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** I have said on a number of occasions that I want to do precisely that. I do not want to just continue with the status quo; I want to continue to improve. I do not want

Scotland to lag behind the status quo at any particular time. It is not just about the position that we are in at March 2019; it is about the position as it will change going forward.

I have been in Brussels a fair bit and one time I was there I met Green 10, which represents European-level green organisations. It was interesting to note the extent to which they are a lot more sceptical about the EU's green credentials. We tend to think that the EU provides us with a gold standard, but those organisations might argue that the EU does not go far enough in some areas, so there are issues there.

I would struggle to think of an area, certainly in my current portfolio, where we in Scotland have not gone further than EU directives, and I want that to continue to be the case. I suppose that the difficulty will be in the extent to which we can stay connected to the conversations as they develop at EU level. That is one reason why I wanted to meet Green 10 and why we are trying to continue that level of engagement. If we are out in March 2019—I still harbour a small hope that everybody will see sense before then—it will become extraordinarily important that we have developed other linkages and established ways in which we can continue to be connected to, aware of or communicate on developments as they take place in the EU.

I am conscious of that as an absolute priority, and it is one of the key things that I have been saying consistently and will continue to say consistently.

**John Scott (Ayr) (Con):** I want to ask specifically about LEZs, so this is probably a question for Humza Yousaf. I want to try to nail him down on some of the specifics. When does the Scottish Government anticipate that an LEZ will be in place in each of Scotland's four largest cities? Do you have a time for each one?

**Humza Yousaf:** We said in the programme for government that the four biggest cities will have zones by 2020 and that the first one will be introduced by 2018. Glasgow has recently been named as the location for the first low-emission zone.

**John Scott:** What about the other cities?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** I have already had meetings with Edinburgh in respect of its zone. There will now be a rolling conversation. I do not think that any of the cities particularly wants to get left behind.

**Humza Yousaf:** I should have said that after 2020 the focus will be on introducing the other air quality management zones by 2023.

**John Scott:** What resources is the Scottish Government making available to support the

development and implementation of an LEZ in Glasgow and then the other three cities?

**Humza Yousaf:** That is a good question. I want to hark back to what I said previously, which is that the collaboration and engagement between ourselves and the cities have been positive. The member will appreciate that we are less than 10 days away from the budget, so I am not going to give him specifics about numbers, despite his best efforts. However, there is an understanding on the part of the Scottish Government that we will have to provide some element of funding, whether that is to help with infrastructure and making the LEZs enforceable or, for example, for bus retrofitting or subsidising a green fleet or any other element of the zones. That conversation is currently taking place. Clearly, all that will depend on the geographic scope and the phasing in of zones as local authorities see them, but I would like to give some reassurance to the member: there is no doubt that the Scottish Government will have to contribute financially towards the implementation of the LEZs in some way, shape or form, and the budget, I hope, will provide more detail on that. We also expect local authorities to come forward with funding.

**John Scott:** Will that commitment be in the budget rather than in your statement on Thursday?

**Humza Yousaf:** Again, I do not want to pre-empt either of them.

**John Scott:** We are within 12 months of the zone being delivered in Glasgow and, as far as I am aware and as Friends of the Earth suggest, there is no commitment yet to funding; there is nothing tangible.

**Humza Yousaf:** There have been commitments to some elements of funding—for example, £1.6 million to support the first phase of the bus emissions abatement retrofit programme. That fund will help operators, so we are already in one way putting our money where our mouth is. Clearly, the member understands the budget statement is coming up. I reassure him that we are positively engaging with local authorities on the funding question. He is right to push, but the answers to that should become fairly apparent. There is a good conversation happening with local authorities and we will continue in that vein.

**Donald Cameron:** I appreciate that you cannot pre-empt the budget or your statement, but can you commit to giving the public and Parliament a fully-fledged costing of the LEZ in Glasgow and the names of the parties who will bear the cost of it in the near future?

**Humza Yousaf:** We should absolutely be as transparent as possible in relation to the finance and scope of the LEZ and so on, but the member

will appreciate that we have to have a safe space in which to be able to speak to local authorities about their ambitions for those zones, where we think that they should go further and where they think we should go further in respect of funding. Those conversations have to take place in a safe space, but once there is agreement between the local authority and Government, the member is absolutely correct that, through the appropriate processes, that will be made obvious and transparent.

**The Convener:** I want to return to the green bus fund. I hear what the minister says about not pre-empting the budget or his statement on Thursday, but there is no bottomless pit of money, so there will be a limit to what the fund can offer. Is there a risk that you may have to restrict access to the fund to support bus operators in urban settings, particularly where LEZs will have to be established?

**Humza Yousaf:** The message to the bus operators is that they also have to put their money where their mouths are. They understand that and they are doing so to a large extent. I am impressed, having visited four big companies—First Bus, Stagecoach, McGill's and, in particular, Lothian Buses—by their plans to green their fleets. They understand the direction that the Government is moving in. Their appeal to me and, equally, to Glasgow City Council—I am sure that that is replicated with other local authorities—is to give them an appropriate amount of time to phase that in. The buses cannot be built and introduced overnight. We want to be careful and, of course, understanding of that, but we also want to ensure that the timelines are robust.

In direct answer to your question, I think that we will be limited by the amount of funding that we get, and we will want to look at getting the biggest bang for our buck. Actually, I would highlight the green incentive in the bus service operators grant as an example of that. We are looking to review that and, again without committing to or pre-empting anything, we are thinking about how we might tier that to ensure that the greatest help is given to Euro 6 rather than Euro 4 buses. I would point out that we are having those conversations at the moment and that no final decision has been made, but I repeat that, although things will be restricted by the amount of funding that we receive, we are looking at how we can make every pound go further.

**The Convener:** Thank you.

**John Scott:** Given that 2018 is not far away, when do you expect the enforcement of the LEZ to begin in Glasgow? We have heard that the funding is going to be in place, but do you have a date for when enforcement will start?

**Humza Yousaf:** That is a good question. The member is right that 2018 is not far away, but I would remind him that it could happen any time that year—

**John Scott:** We know that.

**Humza Yousaf:** Glasgow has told me that the target is very ambitious, but we are definitely committed to and working towards it.

On enforcement, I am sure that the committee is aware of this, but a look at the introduction of low-emission zones across the United Kingdom will show that there has been a phased approach to enforcement. That is wholly sensible, but clearly it will be for Glasgow to determine the scope of the zone, the way it is phased in, the approach to enforcement and so on. It will come to the Government, say, “This is our plan,” and collaborate on those terms. It has already put together very high-level and broad-brush proposals, but it will start to put more meat on the bones—indeed, it is doing so already—and come to us with more detail.

However, as I have said, it is absolutely correct to take a phased approach to enforcement. That has worked in other parts of the United Kingdom and, indeed, on the European continent, and I would expect Glasgow to take the same approach. That is sensible for private motor-car drivers and, for the reasons that I have already set out in response to the convener, for the bus industry, too. Behavioural change will clearly play an important part, with conversations being had early on and the phasing in of enforcement thereafter. I cannot give the member an exact date or timeline for enforcement, because that will be for Glasgow City Council to determine in its proposals and for us to agree in collaboration.

**John Scott:** Thank you. We note the need for a phased approach and, in that respect, we are grateful to the Greater London Authority and Transport for London for their submission, in which they highlight the need for such an approach.

One can only imagine that the timescale will be very tight. In any case, I would have thought that you would be concerned about your inability to give us a date for when enforcement will begin, given that you are putting up the money and will want to know when the results will be delivered. Certainly for a huge number of people in industry and in transport, such as those in the bus sector, it is absolutely critical that they have a deadline that they can work to as soon as possible.

**Humza Yousaf:** We are committed to introducing Scotland’s first low-emission zone by 2018 but, as far as enforcement is concerned, the success of a low-emission zone is not measured by the number of fines that it chalks up. In fact, the

exact opposite is true: we will know that it is working if there are fewer fines.

The point about enforcement is absolutely important, but the submission from the Greater London Authority shows that a pragmatic and phased approach is sensible. The funding that we will put up will go towards not only assisting with, for example, the infrastructure for enforcement but incentivising bus operators to green their fleet, as we have already discussed, and other elements of infrastructure. I have no concerns about the issue. Of course, I am not going to release the funding without having a detailed conversation with Glasgow City Council—indeed, Donald Cameron made a good point about transparency in that respect—but we should not confuse the success of an LEZ with the number of fines that it chalks up. It would be wrong to do so.

**John Scott:** You used the phrase “by 2018”, which I take to mean the end of 2018.

**Humza Yousaf:** That is for introducing low-emission zones.

**John Scott:** But not for enforcement.

**Humza Yousaf:** It will be necessary to take a phased approach to enforcement, and it will be for Glasgow, as the area where the first low-emission zone will be introduced, to come forward with suggestions about when enforcement will come in. We will do that in concert and in conversation, and when we have any more detail and finality in that respect, we will ensure that it is put in the public domain.

11:30

**John Scott:** Returning to something that you said earlier, are you confident that all the infrastructure—the cameras, signage and so on—can be put in place in that timescale? This is probably a daft-laddie question, but will the legislative framework, too, be in place?

**Humza Yousaf:** It is a very reasonable question, and the answer would be yes. I would expect the legislation—and, where appropriate, the infrastructure—to be in place for the introduction of the low-emission zone.

**John Scott:** Finally—and I think that you already alluded to this in your remarks about John Lewis—should LEZs include private vehicles? Secondly, should emissions be reduced per passenger or per vehicle?

**Humza Yousaf:** I think that we have already answered the question about private motor cars, but I would re-emphasise that my steer to Glasgow and the other local authorities that I have spoken to is to be as ambitious as possible. I understand the need for phasing in—it makes

sense to me—but it is important for them to be as ambitious as possible, if only from a perception or presentational point of view. After all, it just would not look right or make much sense to have a Euro 6 bus sitting in a low-emission zone next to a 20-year-old Land Rover that was churning out heavy emissions. It therefore makes sense to me to look at private motor cars, buses, taxis and so on holistically and in the round, but I realise that that will require things to be phased in and an element of political courage to have those difficult conversations.

I will probably refer to my official on the question whether emissions should be reduced either per passenger or per vehicle, but the member will be aware that we concluded a consultation on low-emission zones at the end of last month. We received in the region of 600 responses to it, and after we have analysed them, we will, of course, feed back to the committee and to Parliament. I do not know whether Yvette Sheppard has anything to add.

**Yvette Sheppard (Transport Scotland):** The consultation included questions on the vehicle types that people felt should be covered by LEZs. We will analyse the consultation responses with regard to whether all vehicle types should be covered, and that will feed into the development of the national low-emissions framework that will guide local authorities as they move forward on the issue.

**John Scott:** Notwithstanding the consultation, have you done any early thinking on what types of vehicles should be covered?

**Yvette Sheppard:** I go back to Mr Yousaf's point about expecting local authorities to be ambitious and to take account of all the vehicle types that they need to take account of in order to deliver the objective of the LEZ. That will also involve holistic consideration of the SEPA modelling of the science and air-quality issues.

**Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con):** Glasgow will probably be the first to put an LEZ in place, and the submission from Glasgow City Council suggests that things will be based on modelling and using calculations to predict air quality. Given that the Government is putting money into LEZs, what will the network do to ensure that in five years' time we do not have five completely different ways of implementing the zones, five different databases, five different sets of cameras doing things in different ways and so on? What sort of joined-up approach are you going to have, and what network or framework will be in place to ensure that that happens? I would just remind you of the roll-out of bin collections across the country. Some local authorities threw money down the drain when, had there been a national framework in place to work within, they

might have made some savings. Given the emphasis on things such as big data, how will the Scottish Government ensure that public money is not wasted as a result of everyone trying to reinvent the wheel every time an LEZ is brought in?

**Humza Yousaf:** That is a good question that goes back to my point that we have to walk a fine line between having a national framework, which is important for all the reasons that members have highlighted, and allowing flexibility for local authorities and local areas, because we know that one size does not necessarily fit all. There has to be a bit of give and take in that regard, as the member probably appreciates.

I agree, though, that there must be some kind of national framework. If a local authority decides to implement a low-emission zone, which we would obviously welcome, it has to be able to take off the shelf at least some elements of a national framework. The consultation is important for that, and it has had 600 responses, which is excellent. That will clearly give us high-level objectives for low-emission zones.

In addition, as I said, the cabinet secretary is chairing the steering group that consists of the Government and the four biggest cities of Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee and Aberdeen, which have plans to introduce low-emission zones by 2020. That collaborative conversation will set the tone, but we have to be careful, because what might work for low-emission zones in urban areas might not always translate into working best for rural settings, as I know Mr Carson will be aware. I emphasise that there must be a balance between having a national framework and giving local authorities the flexibility to design low-emission zones that work for them.

**Roseanna Cunningham:** The four cities leadership group is having its first meeting this month. Once we have the four cities around the table, some of the questions that have been raised here are liable to be part of the discussion. That does not necessarily mean that every low-emission zone thereafter will follow exactly the same model, but the leadership group discussion is likely to set sensible parameters for low-emission zones.

However, we should remember that quite a lot of people will have been surprised by some of the places in the hotspots list. The requirements for low-emission zones for parts of Glasgow or Edinburgh will be different from those for low-emission zones in some of the other areas in the top 10, one of which I happen to live in. The challenge of managing that will be interesting—some members will know what I am talking about here.

**John Scott:** On that subject, cabinet secretary, and in relation to Finlay Carson's point, would you welcome, notwithstanding what the minister said about each local authority having the right to make its own decisions, a synchronicity of approach by the four cities so that there is uniformity, where that is possible? Would that be one of your high-level objectives?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** That is one of the issues that will be a matter for discussion for the four cities leadership group, because people will want to iron out any issues that might inadvertently arise. I imagine that some of the problems that Finlay Carson raised will be those that officials in all the local authorities will be trying to avoid. Apart from anything else, we all know that economies of scale are an issue for technological input. Rather than having lots of different models and everybody buying different things, there is a potential purchasing advantage from choosing a single model. The cautionary point that I was trying to make earlier is that some of the fixes in some places might have to be very different, simply because of where they are.

**The Convener:** A few minutes ago, the minister talked about ambition and political courage. If we are serious and ambitious about tackling poor air quality, should there not be a place for congestion charging and for workplace parking levies, if it were possible to have a dispensation for car sharing? Do we not need to take such steps, however unpopular and politically courageous they would be?

**Humza Yousaf:** Political courage is important for the reasons that I have mentioned. Although people are very sympathetic to meeting our ambitious local and national air-quality targets, measures will be required that some people frankly will not be so enthusiastic about. We already see some of that: when Glasgow was announced as the first low-emission zone, I spoke to some stakeholders who were not particularly enthusiastic about what they perceived as the economic impact on their businesses. We need to provide the counterargument that, if we get it right, it will bring more people into our city centres. For example, a bus can carry many more people than a car can. More bums on seats means more people going to shops and cafes, and more economic regeneration for our town and city centres.

Workplace parking levies have been used in the United Kingdom—in Nottingham, if my memory serves me correctly—and we mentioned them in the draft climate change plan. Once again, I am heartened by the number of local authorities that have approached me—the cabinet secretary may have found this, too—and asked when the Government will introduce legislation on the issue.

They are keen to explore that option, learn from Nottingham and bring such levies to their local authority. I am pleased that there is a real desire to lead on the issue in Scotland.

As you know, congestion charging is not part of our policy. Low-emission zones help us to get to our very ambitious outcomes in a way that is palatable to the public. That is where the emphasis lies at the moment.

**The Convener:** What progress has the Government made in exploring how freight consolidation centres can assist us in this journey?

**Humza Yousaf:** I have had a few conversations. The evidence on consolidation centres is a bit mixed. Some evidence suggests that they are very good for the urban environment, but a lot of other evidence suggests that they do not quite have the impact that we might envisage when we first hear about them. However, internal conversations on freight consolidation centres are happening.

I am more enthusiastic about our discussions on moving freight from road to rail, which are going very well. We are on the cusp of some really exciting projects. There are huge opportunities, particularly for timber, but also for Scotland's food and drink industry—for whisky and other Scottish produce. I am unable to say too much to the committee today, but we are on the cusp of some really exciting opportunities on freight. If we crack some of those, the floodgates will really open for the development of a number of other schemes. We have Government funds—the freight facilities grant and other funds—to assist in shifting freight from road to rail.

**The Convener:** What are some of the negatives about freight consolidation centres?

**Humza Yousaf:** Others will be able to furnish the committee with a little more detail. It is not that there are negatives; it is that they have not had quite the impact that people expected. There are also some concerns from the business community. We are still viewing them with an open mind; I am not taking them off the table by any stretch of the imagination. We are looking at freight consolidation centres in other parts of the UK. It is too early to take a definitive view, but they have not had the impact that people might have thought.

**Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab):** Good morning to you all. The minister briefly highlighted active travel. Craig McLaren, of the Royal Town Planning Institute Scotland, said to us on active travel:

"Although it is in CAFS, I would like there to be more; I would like greater recognition of the role that active travel can play ... the doubling of the budget for active travel is a step in the right direction, but we need to make sure that it



is used in the right way and that it has the maximum impact.”—[*Official Report, Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee*, 31 October 2017; c 9.]

It would be helpful if you could share with us your thoughts on active travel, minister, but we should not forget that the national walking strategy is a robust part of active travel.

11:45

**Humza Yousaf:** I echo what the member said about the national walking strategy, which is sometimes overlooked. However, walking is the easiest form of active travel and we do not need too much fancy equipment for it; we need only a good pair of trainers or, if we wish to be a bit more energetic, we can use hiking boots and so on.

I return to something that I said in the debate on active travel. Sir Alex Ferguson came to my constituency to open a walkway in Govan, where he was born, and he mentioned that when he was the Manchester United manager, the best exercise that he could recommend to his players was walking. As I said, Sir Alex Ferguson is probably the greatest football manager in modern history after Jock Stein, so it was good that he made that point.

That point was a bit gratuitous, but the emphasis from stakeholder groups is that the doubling of the active travel budget has been welcomed, but we have to ensure that we spend it in the right way and get the most bang for our buck. I had an early conversation with the stakeholders—the member will be aware of that, because she meets them regularly in the same way as I do—to start to tease out what some of the spending in the active travel budget will look like. It does not mean that we will have to chuck out everything that we have done previously, but a large part of the active travel money will be spent on cycling infrastructure. I am a big believer in segregated cycling infrastructure, because it is important for giving people the confidence to get on their bikes.

There is a lot of work for us to do on behavioural change and emphasising the many benefits that cycling can promote, not just the physical and mental health benefits. There is also work to do on behavioural change for drivers, many of whom are also cyclists, and for businesses. We can point out to businesses that if more of their employees engaged in active travel, they would have a more productive workforce, as the evidence bears out. There are many good examples of businesses doing that.

As the Liberal Democrat amendment to the motion for the active travel debate highlighted, there should also be a focus on cycling training for young people—I am a great believer in early

intervention. As we discussed with cycling lobbying organisations, some of the active travel money should be used for some out-of-the-box thinking and trialling things in Scotland. We have always been a good test-bed in that regard and we should not be afraid to try new initiatives and incentives to get people to be active, whether through cycling or walking.

I have tasked my officials to work closely with those cycling organisations. There is no lack of ideas or enthusiasm from them. However, as I said, we must ensure that we get the most bang for our buck from the active travel budget to achieve our ambitious vision and the important health outcomes that we seek.

**Claudia Beamish:** I will focus on the target to achieve 10 per cent of journeys being made by bike by 2020. When we took evidence on active travel recently from Stephen Thomson of Transport Scotland, he said:

“Colleagues in Transport Scotland seem confident about working towards that target.”—[*Official Report, Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee*, 31 October 2017; c 22.]

However, as the minister knows, there are others who are far less confident. Can you highlight some of the ways in which you and your officials are confident?

**Humza Yousaf:** First, it is a vision and I accept that it will be difficult to achieve. The member has made that point to me previously. However, if we get hung up on meeting absolutely this or that target, we will be in danger of losing sight of the big picture. However, do not get me wrong—we should, without a shadow of a doubt, be striving to achieve that 10 per cent target by 2020. That is why there has been a doubling of the active travel budget.

The initiative is popular with me and the member, but many other people have asked me whether it is the right priority. I have been robust in saying that it is and that that is why there has been a significant increase in the active travel budget to a record level—a doubling of the budget. However, as I said in my previous answer, I must ensure that we get the most bang for our buck, because I am trying as hard as I can to get us towards that 2020 target. It will be difficult and challenging, but doubling the funding will significantly help us to get there.

**Claudia Beamish:** I should have declared an interest, because I am co-convener of the cross-party group in the Scottish Parliament on cycling, walking and buses. That integration of interests is an important move on from the previous CPG’s focus on just cycling.

This question is for the minister, but the cabinet secretary might also wish to comment. How are

you working in your departments and in discussion with other portfolio areas on how active travel will help the air quality ambitions?

**Humza Yousaf:** That is certainly part of our consideration. Another part of that conversation is about electric bikes. As my officials know, I am keen for them to explore the use of electric bikes. There is a lot of emphasis on electric vehicles, but we should also look at electric bikes, which, for example, can make very manageable and easy a 5km journey that some people might otherwise find difficult, particularly in some of Scotland's more hilly landscapes.

I am pleased and heartened to hear that the cross-party group's title now includes buses. I am sure that he will not mind me saying this, but an issue was raised directly with me by the managing director of McGill's Bus Services, Ralph Roberts, who said that he had looked at a number of initiatives that he thought would increase cycling—for example, having cycle spaces on his buses in the form of racks at the front, as is seen in buses in some European cities. He told me that there is a UK regulatory or legislative impediment to doing that and I said that I would work constructively with the UK Government to see whether we could work around that.

As I said, I am pleased that there is a CPG on cycling, walking and buses, because the integration of transport is hugely important. That is why we have had numerous conversations about how to increase cycle spaces on trains, including the new high-speed trains that will come in next year.

I can give the member an assurance and guarantee that active travel is a vital component of our discussions about low-emission zones and improving air quality.

**Mark Ruskell:** Is there a consistent level of ambition from local authorities in implementing the measures that are needed to push active travel? For example, the Government's policy is to push for 20mph speed limits in residential areas where cars mix with cyclists and pedestrians, but there is an inconsistency in that regard. Dundee, for example, has only a couple of streets with 20mph zones, but virtually every residential area in Fife has been designated a 20mph zone. Are there issues with getting consistency around Scotland on that measure and others? How do you push that consistency?

**Humza Yousaf:** I know that the member has a great interest in 20mph zones and that he has been doing a lot of work on his proposed bill. On the general point about aligning policy, I hope that I provided an answer on that in response to a question from Donald Cameron. As I said, there is no magic wand for initiatives such as 20mph

zones, which will happen only through engagement, the focused steering groups that we already have and through holding events such as the one that I held jointly with COSLA to emphasise the message. Levers such as funding low-emission zones can also be used.

There is no silver bullet or magic wand for ensuring 100 per cent alignment between our ambitions, targets and visions and those of local authorities, but we are working closely with local authority partners, regional transport partners and others to try to get to that position.

With regard to the 20mph zone, it remains the Government's position that local authorities should have discretion because local factors may make it right for them to designate a speed limit of 30mph rather than 20mph on a road. The member is aware of that, because I note that in his own proposals, he explores the issue of a more uniform approach. I emphasise what I said to him previously. I keep an open mind on that issue in government. He will have to consider some practical and pragmatic issues and we will raise them with him in the debate on his bill. I also welcome the opportunity that the member will have to brief me on the more than 2,000 responses that he has had to the consultation on his bill; I understand that they are vastly in favour of his proposals but I am keen to speak to him one-to-one to understand a little more about that.

**Finlay Carson:** I want to move on to tackling air quality hotspots. We received written evidence proposing a range of measures to prioritise air quality improvement in certain areas, particularly those that have been in persistent breach of NO<sub>2</sub> levels. Aberdeen City Council suggests that we should be more targeted. You said that one size does not fit all and that there may need to be a range of different actions to address particular hotspots. Outwith CAFS and what might be included in local air quality action plans, what quick wins could there be to tackle hotspots? Examples might be the installation of green walls with moss on them to absorb pollutants, the use of dust suppressants or even subsidised travel passes.

**Roseanna Cunningham:** If there were obvious quick wins, we would look to implement them. In the top 10 places where there are major issues, there is not necessarily an obvious way to fix them. I made vague reference to the fact that I live in Crieff, which is one of the top six places exceeding the level for particulate matter. Crieff's high street, which is measured, is part of a trunk road, so green walls will not work.

One of the problems is buses being choked into a small area. I do not want to create a problem by increasing the number of buses. If there was an easy answer, we would be able to find it. The

LEZs, I suspect, will be the quickest, biggest win in this regard. They will create the biggest difference and I hope that the areas that are particularly bad in Glasgow, Aberdeen and Dundee will benefit speedily from the zones. That is on a much larger scale than what is being talked about. The number of bus services where I live has just doubled, so what was an hourly service to Perth is now half hourly and what was a two-hourly service to Stirling is now hourly. The likelihood is that the number of people using the services will increase, but the number of buses in use will also increase. However, we are trying to move to a green fleet. Some measures will not necessarily work and there will be lots of areas in which there will be difficulties, but the larger scale proposals, such as LEZs, will deliver the biggest hits the quickest.

**Finlay Carson:** However, you will not get a low-emission zone any time soon in Crieff or in Springholm and Crocketford, through which the A75 travels.

12:00

**Roseanna Cunningham:** Arguably, we have to come up with some kind of plan. We cannot simply ignore those areas. We all recognise where the biggest problems are. Most people would not recognise those areas as nationally significant problems—that is how people will look at it—but they understand that Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee and Aberdeen are. That is why, if there were easy, quick wins for the cities, which is where the biggest problems are, we would find them.

The active travel debate is interesting, but—I hope that my colleague Humza Yousaf does not mind me saying this—a lot of the discussion around walking and cycling talks about them as if they were recreational activities. Active travel works for air quality only if we persuade people to replace their car journeys with walking and cycling because, if we do not replace car journeys with something better, it does not necessarily have the impact that we want.

There are many places and many issues where the interplay does not work as best we might hope. That is why we must approach with caution the notion of there being some simple, magic wand, quick wins. We will not necessarily get the results that we want in the shorter term.

**Finlay Carson:** If we are moving away from the big four cities again, is enough of a joined-up approach being considered? Can we consider writing accountability into single outcome agreements or joint health protection plans in councils?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** It is for local authorities to consider whether such issues should be included in the single outcome agreements. I

would certainly like them to be included, if possible, but we do not mandate the single outcome agreements. We talk to local authorities about their development; the process is collaborative, and we do not impose agreements on local authorities—nor, I suspect, would they welcome an attempt to do that. That goes back to conversations that we have been having about wider engagement on many issues and ensuring that everybody who is involved understands the implications of decisions.

**The Convener:** We still have three themes that we want to cover, so short sharp questions and answers would be welcome.

**David Stewart:** You will know, cabinet secretary and minister, that we took some evidence from the Greater London Authority, which was doing a lot of work on schools in disadvantaged areas that are subjected to high pollution levels. Is the Scottish Government doing any work on similar examples in Scotland?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** We do not have specific plans related to schools, but there will clearly be schools in the hotspots, so they will be a part of the discussion about low-emission zones. We think that our current monitoring programme is enough to pick up particular issues. There is not an issue at every school, although there are particular areas where there might be concern. We recognise the impact of air quality on health and, specifically, on the vulnerable groups who are the most impacted. That includes not only elderly people with respiratory ailments, but young people with respiratory ailments. However, at the moment, we think that the monitoring network throughout Scotland is the best way to use our resources. That means that monitors are located in the areas of most concern, which might or might not include schools.

**Humza Yousaf:** David Stewart will be aware of the guidelines—they are guidelines—on 20mph zones. Roads around schools are candidates for having the speed limit reduced to 20mph. That is largely for road safety reasons, but it also meets air quality objectives.

As part of our doubling of the active travel budget, we are giving serious consideration to how we might ramp up bikeability training—which some people call cycling proficiency training—to get young people in primary schools trained on their bikes in the safety and sanctuary of the playground as well as giving them on-road training.

**David Stewart:** I return to the cabinet secretary's point about monitoring. You will know that we took evidence from Ricardo Energy & Environment, which said that there should be more automatic monitoring stations in Scotland. At

the moment, there are 95—roughly three per council. Its criticism was that the data from the current diffusion tubes is not good enough. This is a technical question, which might be for the officials: is the Scottish Government aware of the lack of automatic monitors and the alleged poor data from the existing technology?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** Our view is that we are operating a comprehensive monitoring network. We could always argue for the number of monitoring stations to be increased exponentially, but we might end up increasing their number in areas where need is not great. We constantly keep that under review. I should also say that it is expensive: the kit required is not cheap, so we need to think carefully about where monitors should be deployed.

**David Stewart:** What is your response to the criticism about the poor data from the diffusion tubes—the current technology?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** I would have to get a specific technical briefing on diffusion tubes, which I will do. There are technicalities around that.

**David Stewart:** I was not expecting you to give the detail, much as I admire your ability to answer questions.

Sustrans made the interesting point that the legal requirement to protect people in air quality management areas

“is vague and there is no penalty for failing to reduce harmful air pollution.”

Do you agree?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** Are you asking whether I think that there should be some legal recourse? One would have to be very cautious about that, because there are so many factors involved in the direct relationship between air quality and public health that it would be quite difficult to narrow them down specifically, for the purpose of a court action, which I guess is what would ultimately be considered. I speak as a former lawyer when I say that that would allow endless get-out clauses.

**David Stewart:** Do local authorities currently have powers to carry out spot checks on vehicles to ensure that they comply with air quality standards?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** My understanding is that they do—there is a power to do precisely that. There is financial support, through the Scottish Government, that allows them to undertake roadside emission testing if they wish to, and to target idling vehicles, which I get a lot of constituency mail about. That is one of the things that needs to be dealt with—I suspect that it is the

cause of some of the top 10 business that we are seeing.

**David Stewart:** Will local authorities that have LEZs have more powers than local authorities that do not have LEZs?

**Humza Yousaf:** That will come down to the consultation that has just taken place on the legal framework, the national framework and the scope. Local authorities might well want different scope, different enforcement measures and so forth. John Scott's point about ensuring that the legal framework is in place for the introduction of LEZs is important. I have given a commitment that we will certainly work towards that, because our commitment is to introduce our first LEZ in 2018. I know that members pushed us on that repeatedly. There might be different approaches to enforcement, depending on how local authorities wish to implement LEZs. Our job in Government is to ensure that the legislative levers exist.

**David Stewart:** Will that require primary legislation or could it be done through statutory instrument or secondary legislation?

**Humza Yousaf:** Again, we will have to look at the consultation responses to see how far people want us to go and how far we need to go to get the outcomes that we wish to achieve, so if David Stewart does not mind, I will reserve judgment on that. However, I will come back on that, and once we have early indications, I will make sure the committee is informed of our plans via the convener.

**John Scott:** LEZs will probably need to be introduced via subordinate legislation. As there is likely to be a bottleneck in such legislation coming through, it would be well worth our while to have the job done and dusted as soon as possible, given the Government's and Parliament's ability to deal with the expected increase in secondary legislation and the critical time that will be required for LEZs.

**Humza Yousaf:** Some early work has been done in identifying the appropriate secondary legislation to enable the zones to be introduced from 2018. My point was further to David Stewart's point: if more primary or secondary legislation is required in relation to enforcement, scope or whatever else a local authority wants to bring forward, clearly we will have to give that consideration. I take John Scott's point that we would need to move quickly on that. However, we are well aware that secondary legislation will be needed to introduce LEZs, so we have had conversations on how and when to progress that.

**Finlay Carson:** In earlier sessions, witnesses have mentioned the volume of information and data available through the Met Office, automatic number plate recognition and congestion charges.

The cabinet secretary referred to the cost of physical detectors, and the lack of, or shortage of them, with only three available per council. There was a suggestion that there could be more joined-up thinking to produce better modelling and give indications of pollution hotspots, but there is nobody available to facilitate the joined-up thinking. Given the costs and the concerns regarding air quality, should not the Scottish Government facilitate such thinking with all the data that is currently available in order to reduce the cost of monitoring air quality?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** “Lack of” and “shortage of” are Finlay Carson’s phrases. I did not use them. I suggested that one could argue for an exponential increase, but whether it would help is another matter. I said in response to an earlier question that SEPA is undertaking modelling work that will be of assistance to local authorities, so those issues are being examined. I expect that there will be lively discussions at the leadership group and other forums about precisely that.

**Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (SNP):** I will stick to air monitoring stations and air quality management areas. The cabinet secretary and the minister may be aware that the committee visited Corstorphine and met members of its community council in October. I hasten to add that we travelled by service bus; I would give 10 out of 10 to Lothian Buses for the service that it provides. An AQMA is in place in Corstorphine, with a monitoring station, and although NO<sub>2</sub> exceedances have improved over short periods of time, the annual mean limit continues to be exceeded. The short-term improvement was put down to changes in traffic flow at an adjacent junction, as you probably both know, and cleaner buses, but the council official who attended the meeting said that it was difficult to pinpoint the exact reason. How can public bodies be certain that actions that are taken to improve air quality at known hotspots will be effective?

12:15

**Roseanna Cunningham:** I am looking through my briefing—I know that in here somewhere is an indication of areas where it is quite clear that actions have made a considerable difference. Such areas are important to emphasise. My officials will find the relevant paper for me in a moment.

I can see from the paper that St John’s Road in Edinburgh is certainly one of the areas where one can point directly to improvements in air quality. It is not a one-off. Other areas—for example, Cupar in Fife—have shown improvements. It is interesting that the areas are not all inner-city areas. For example, there has been a lot of collaborative work in Grangemouth, which Angus

MacDonald will probably have an interest in. Midlothian Council was able to revoke the air quality management area in Pathhead in Midlothian. That AQMA had been declared for domestic emissions of particulate matter, but revocation took place after the village was connected to the gas grid.

There are other areas where specific actions have meant that AQMAs have resulted in very positive outcomes. I suppose the trick is in being able to develop actions under AQMAs that fit well with local circumstances. Going back to the quick-wins argument, there might be actions that are quick wins, but we will not necessarily know about all of them because they are taken at such a local level.

**Angus MacDonald:** Thank you. You regularly raised the issue of Grangemouth when there was a problem of excessive SO<sub>2</sub> levels. However, Ineos invested about £70 million in a sulphur recovery unit, which clearly had a positive impact.

**Roseanna Cunningham:** I will make the point that the changes in Cupar in Fife came about because of a change to traffic signalling and traffic flow, which led to a reduction in the levels of nitrogen dioxide. Such results can sometimes come from quite small things.

**Angus MacDonald:** Ironically, we have also received written evidence that blames a rise in air pollution on traffic-calming measures, because of their influence on vehicles’ acceleration and deceleration at mini roundabouts, speed humps, pedestrian and cycle zones and—I apologise to Mark Ruskell for mentioning this—20mph zones. What are your views on that evidence?

**Humza Yousaf:** Can you repeat the first part of your question?

**Angus MacDonald:** Yes. We have had evidence that blames the rise in air pollution on traffic-calming measures.

**Humza Yousaf:** I have seen some of that evidence. I, too, apologise to Mark Ruskell for mentioning 20mph zones. I am sure that he will not mind my saying that at the first meeting that we had about 20mph zones, I made the point that some evidence showed the air quality picture was worse in some 20mph zones. However, having explored and examined the issue in more detail, I have found that there is much more evidence to the contrary.

I believe that we are going in the right direction on air quality by doubling the active travel budget, creating low-emission zones, the work that we are doing on electric vehicles and our ambitious programme to phase out the need for new diesel and petrol cars by 2032.

On 20mph zones, I am aware of the evidence to which the member referred, but it seems to me that there is a lot more evidence to the contrary. We will maintain our position on the issue and we will, as I said to Mark Ruskell previously, keep an open mind.

**Stewart Stevenson:** One of the things that are happening across Scotland is the introduction of domestic wood burners and, in commercial premises, biomass boilers. Clearly, that is helping the CO<sub>2</sub> agenda, but is it damaging in terms of particulates, SO<sub>2</sub> and NO<sub>x</sub> gases?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** Wood burners are very attractive, so people want to have them. I suspect that questions have been asked about them for quite a while. The modern versions of such stoves and boilers are probably of a sufficiently high standard to deal with some of the earlier questions.

I guess that there is an issue around testing appliances in smoke control areas. I do not live in one of those, so I am not quite sure how that operates. We are back to our friend planning, because there are usually permitted development rights, which means that local authorities do not have much of a handle on how many of these things are out there. Unless they are in an air quality management area, it can be difficult for local authorities to assess their impact. Local authorities will not know the number of installations and therefore it is hard for them to monitor the impact.

This is one of the developments that suggest that the Clean Air Act 1993 needs to be updated because it predates this move. It goes back to some of the interrelationships between policies that, in a sense, have a good side and a bad side to them.

I am aware that local authorities have recently completed a survey among themselves about complaints about smoke and odour. I am told that they will shortly be writing to the Government about their findings. The issue is obviously moving up the agenda and we are aware of it, but there are no immediately obvious solutions.

**Stewart Stevenson:** We have two members of the ministerial team in front of us today. It is suggested that a number of European countries are successfully doing things in agriculture that might help, although that is another minister's responsibility. Can the ministers who are here identify others of their colleagues who can have a good side or a bad side effect on this particular agenda so that, if necessary, the committee can engage with them?

**The Convener:** Whose Christmas card list do you want to be crossed off?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** Quite. The member knows perfectly well which other portfolio will have an interest in the subject. In these circumstances, it would probably be helpful for the committee to raise it directly with that portfolio. We are aware that total annual ammonia emissions in Scotland are significantly impacted on by emissions from agriculture. Despite the automatic assumption that this is about green coos as opposed to non-green coos, the emissions are mostly from the application of organic or inorganic manure to soils rather than the coos themselves. In fairness to coos, I have often wondered whether anybody has tried to measure the ammonia emissions from the human livestock on the planet, but I suppose there are some difficulties with going there.

**Stewart Stevenson:** Yes—so we should have lavender fields around silage.

**Humza Yousaf:** I will try to raise the tone after those remarks. When I first became the Minister for External Affairs and International Development some years ago, I sat on the Government's sub-committee on climate change—

**Roseanna Cunningham:** Did you?

**Humza Yousaf:** Yes. I was heartened then—as I am now by the recent conversations that we have had about the draft climate change plan—by the fact that all the ministers with relevant portfolios had open discussions. There might be a temptation for ministers to put their arms around their portfolios and say that they do not want to do any more, but there is real collaboration there. I would not divulge everything that is said in those meetings, but there is a collaborative approach across the ministerial team. We are all trying to get to the same place and we have to, because we are committed to doing so. Members will have seen that in the draft climate change plan.

**Roseanna Cunningham:** The climate change plan, which will be published in February, will include these issues. I could advise the committee about action that is being taken or looked at, but I will ask my colleague in the other portfolio to write formally to update the committee.

**The Convener:** That would be useful. We have identified a number of items that need to be followed up, and we will have the clerks liaise with your officials to take them forward. This has been a useful extended session. I thank you for your time.

At its next meeting on 12 December, the committee will hear evidence from various stakeholders on the Scottish Government's draft budget 2018-19.

12:25

*Meeting continued in private until 12:42.*

This is the final edition of the *Official Report* of this meeting. It is part of the Scottish Parliament *Official Report* archive and has been sent for legal deposit.

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