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Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee

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CONTENTS

	Col.
DECISION ON TAKING BUSINESS IN PRIVATE	1
COP26 OUTCOMES	2

NET ZERO, ENERGY AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE
11th Meeting 2021, Session 6

CONVENER

*Dean Lockhart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Fiona Hyslop (Linlithgow) (SNP)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Natalie Don (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
*Jackie Dunbar (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
*Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con)
*Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab)
*Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:

Teresa Anderson (ActionAid International)
Mary Church (Friends of the Earth Scotland)
Jess Pepper (Climate Café)
Professor Dave Reay (Edinburgh Climate Change Institute)
Mike Robinson (Royal Scottish Geographical Society)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Peter McGrath

LOCATION

Committee Room 2

Scottish Parliament

Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee

Tuesday 23 November 2021

[The Convener opened the meeting at 10:00]

Decision on Taking Business in Private

The Convener (Dean Lockhart): Good morning and welcome to the 11th meeting of the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee. I remind everyone that social distancing measures are in place at Holyrood. Please observe them as you enter and leave the committee room.

We have received apologies from Natalie Don and also from Collette Stevenson, who has been substituting for her.

Agenda item 1 is consideration of whether to take in private item 3, which is consideration of the evidence that we will hear on outcomes from the 26th United Nations climate change conference of the parties—COP26. Are we agreed?

Members *indicated agreement.*

COP26 Outcomes

10:01

The Convener: Our main item of business today is an evidence session on the outcomes of COP26 and early views from experts on its implications for Scotland's climate change policies. We will hear from two panels of witnesses this morning, and I am delighted to welcome our first panel. Professor Dave Reay is executive director of the Edinburgh Climate Change Institute and Mike Robinson is chief executive of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society.

Good morning to both of you. We are delighted that you could join us to provide your early insights into the outcomes of COP26. Professor Reay, thank you for your written submission, which is a very useful overview of your initial thoughts. I believe that you would like to make a short opening statement. I invite you to do that now, before we move on to questions.

Professor Dave Reay (Edinburgh Climate Change Institute): Thanks a lot, convener, and I thank the committee for having me along. I know that you heard from Malini Mehra and Jim Skea last week, so I will keep my statement fairly short. I have also looked at what Alasdair Reid in the Scottish Parliament information centre team has produced, which is a really good summary of COP26.

One thing that I want to highlight, which I hope comes through in my written submission, concerns some of the implications for Scotland. I guess that we will talk about them in more depth, but I note the amount of attention that was paid to Scotland at COP26 because of our ambitious targets and our being further down the line, in essence, than a lot of nations in trying to do this work. There was a lot of attention on how we are getting on, how we are dealing with the barriers and opportunities and, it was to be hoped, how we are sharing information on mistakes that may have been made along the way. It was really good to see that.

Glasgow and Scotland did a great job in hosting COP26. A lot of attention was paid to our targets, as well as to all the targets that nations have submitted and committed to—the nationally determined contributions through to 2030, but also the long-term ones. A key issue that will keep coming back for rich countries such as ours is whether those targets are aligned with the Paris climate goals. As has been talked about at length over the years, they are aligned if we take into account only what our emissions are now, but the fair-share estimate in relation to our historical emissions and our capacity to act means that we

need to go much further in other ways. That came through at quite a few events at COP26.

Another important issue that came through really strongly—this is why it is so good that the committee's inquiry is coming up—is local action. COP26 was supposed to be all about implementation, with a year of action and a decade of action on the Paris agreement. There was lots of discussion about how that works on the ground in local government, cities and communities. You are spot on with the focus of your up-coming inquiry.

Another thing that I mention in my submission is the just transition. Again, a lot of the world sees Scotland as a test bed for how that can be achieved. That issue is going to become bigger and bigger as we go through the year towards COP27. There is the example of South Africa moving away from coal, how that is supported, and the number of jobs in that industry. It is a bit like oil and gas in Scotland. That will be crucial in respect of the nationally determined contributions being realised and sustainable domestically, rather than becoming politically infeasible because a just transition is not achieved.

My summary, which I hope is succinct, is about whether COP26 was a success. I am always a massive over-optimist, so I went into COP26 thinking that it was probably the most science-based COP that there has ever been, in terms of the sixth assessment report and the working group I report already being out and action being taken on that. I guess that my dreams were made of alignment with the 1.5°C commitment, but I knew that that would not happen—I guess that all of us did. There was a slight closing there, but it was nowhere near enough.

There were a lot of good things, which Jim Skea and Malini Mehra covered with the committee last week. However, COP26 failed to deliver alignment with 1.5°C, which is a crucial target for the world. In terms of the physics of climate change, the 1.5°C target is still alive, but time is very tight to deliver it. I guess that the year ahead, running up to the Egypt COP, will be make or break for it.

The Convener: Thank you for those remarks, Professor Reay. Mr Robinson, do you wish to make a brief opening statement before we move to questions?

Mike Robinson (Royal Scottish Geographical Society): Yes. It might be helpful if I give some broad reflections, if that is okay. Like Dave Reay, I think that there was no surprise. As it stood, COP26 was a little bit of a disappointment on some levels. Moving to 2.4°C is not the outcome that we were looking for. That is a lot better than 3.7°C, which we had from Paris, but, as we all know, we still have some distance to go. However, it is important that COP26 is not portrayed as an abject failure, because it was not. That would be to misunderstand the United Nations process.

What came out of COP26 for me was a reminder—if I needed one—that the UN process is slow, cumbersome and tortuously complex, and that it can usually move only at the speed of the slowest contributor. That makes us wonder whether there are other mechanisms to help to move some of the agenda forward and whether there are items that can be taken off the table and dealt with separately. Cement is a good example, from our perspective. That is a critical issue. Seven per cent of global emissions could probably be dealt with much more easily outwith that process in a Montreal protocol-style agreement.

I think that Scotland performed quite well at COP26. It was recognised for its ambition in relation to legislation, and a lot of the actions and work that we were involved in were about lifting the profile of some of what is going on in Scotland. That is not to pretend that we have done enough; rather, we are still at the head of a journey that a lot of people are on, and it is important that we share the learning. Delegates whom I came across in the blue zone, in the green zone and in the non-governmental organisation communities had a real appetite to find out more about what has been going on here. That lends itself to some potential for increased moral leadership, but there are also expertise, academic and business opportunities.

I would like to think that there are also opportunities in the alliances. I did a presentation in the Nordic pavilion. It is clear that there are countries that are more progressive on that agenda, and there is the really exciting potential for Scotland to develop relationships with the more progressive nations. However, we also have to consider those that are dragging their heels. We have a very close affinity with some of those countries—the USA, Canada and, in particular, Australia. We have to see the opportunity to help them to get properly on board on that journey, do more, and take the issue more seriously—and maybe to take some of the fear out of it for them, as well.

I would like to think that it is not over yet. We have not handed over to Sharm el-Sheikh, which has the chair for the next year; the United Kingdom has the chair for the next 12 months. We still have some work to do.

The Convener: Thank you for those introductory remarks. Will you both elaborate on your initial observations about the major outcomes that you view as successes and the areas where you think more action is required? Professor Reay, you mentioned that there was no giant leap forward to limit warming to 1.5°C, but you also

pointed to major steps forward on a basket of key climate issues such as transparency, carbon markets and coal. Are we moving to a sort of annual COP process in which there will be a significant conference to update targets every year, as opposed to the previous three to five-year cycle?

Professor Reay: That is a really good question. As we see from the cover text of the Glasgow climate pact, nations are requested to provide updated commitments in 2022 for COP27, but that could be a one-off. It recognises that the ratchets in the mechanism to meet the Paris agreement, of which COP26 was the first, are too far apart. They are five years apart. Because COP26 was a year late, the next one would be four years down the line. The request recognises where we are with emissions and alignment with the Paris climate goals. We will see whether that becomes a regular thing and the request for new nationally determined contributions is in the text every year.

About 40 nations did not submit updated NDCs even for COP26. Many will say that it is a lot of effort and work, particularly for small states, and that for them to do it again next year and go beyond what they have already done is a bit of a challenge. What John Kerry said about the US NDC was interesting. He was really pushing for a lot of international action at COP26, but he equivocated a bit on whether we would see an updated NDC from the US because that depends on the domestic circumstances.

It is great to have the request in the cover text and we definitely need that increased ambition because we are a long way off the target, as Mike Robinson said. However, let us see how many nations follow through with that and whether it becomes an annual event. From a scientific point of view, given where we are and the need to close the gap rapidly, we cannot wait for five years. We need an annual update to NDCs, with increased ambition. However, we need support for all nations to be able to do that, as not all of them have the capacity.

Mike Robinson: One of the key things is that the UN clearly has a problem with the speed of progress. It has taken 26 years to get to where we are and finally mention fossil fuels as a problem. We urgently need to find a way to increase the speed of decision making. That is true domestically as much as internationally. The annualisation of commitments is a good idea in theory but, as Dave Reay said, if nations do not have the domestic support, they will not bring forward new commitments. There is a danger that we will leave more and more people behind. That highlights the frailties of the UN process and it raises the question of how we can move the situation forward in different ways.

Scotland being co-chair of the under2 coalition is a good example, as it provides an opportunity to create alliances with the progressive nations that are moving us forward and to start working more collaboratively across that group. The group includes not just nations, but places such as California, which is clearly ahead of the curve. There are real opportunities there. It is important that the coalition starts to show more leadership, and Scotland has a role in that.

However, there is also an issue about the speed of domestic decision making. It is a difficult thing to speed up, but I sense that, if we are going to solve the crisis, we need to slow down politics and speed up decision making. Both things are challenging.

The Convener: I will ask one more question before I bring in Mark Ruskell. In areas where progress was made at COP26—such as on carbon markets, which have been highlighted, and on coal and increasing transparency and reporting requirements—how might the outcomes impact on policy in Scotland and the rest of the UK? What practical implications for Governments and businesses might arise from the outcomes in those areas?

10:15

Professor Reay: It is positive that a lot of the Paris rulebook was agreed in a way that closes some loopholes. A crucial point in relation to markets, which you mentioned, is the need to avoid double counting in trade in emissions between nations. There will probably be a role for Parliaments, as well as Governments, in how voluntary carbon markets operate in the context of what has been agreed under article 6 of the Paris agreement. That relates to credits being authorised. The idea is that, if a nation sells authorised credits, it must take them off its balance so that there is no double counting.

However, there is still a grey area in which regulation will probably have to play a role. In the voluntary carbon market, a company might fund projects and claim emission reductions, but there is no corresponding reduction in the national accounting. If a company really wanted to play the text of the Paris agreement and what came out of Glasgow, it could go down the greenwashing line by counting emission reductions that were already part of a nation's efforts to cut its emissions. That was at least made overt in the discussions in Glasgow. Dealing with that comes down to all the states looking at how their voluntary carbon markets are working—at whether intervention is needed or whether the market will look after itself.

There is a distinction and, on the basis of the outcome, we will have two tiers of credits. We

know that authorised credits will not be double counted—they will relate to real reductions that are not copied somewhere else, so the atmosphere will experience that reduction. Attention needs to be given to the other tier, which is outside authorised credits, by the Government and the Parliament—and potentially the courts—in Scotland. An issue for all nations is the need to avoid double counting.

The Convener: The subject is fascinating.

Mike Robinson: I agree that avoiding double counting is critical. A great example at home comes from tree planting and agriculture. When companies buy up land to put trees in, it cannot be used to offset land management issues. That will become an increasing issue.

The concern is about scrutiny and how we monitor all of that. The private sector is likely to respond more quickly than some Governments to some of the COP outcomes, because the sector looks for trends and certainty. It is still waking up to changes—the level of knowledge and understanding in the business community is still not as high as it should be, given the issue's importance. The certainty of the direction will start to kick in—for example, the move away from coal seems obvious and predictable, but it is still surprising some in the business community. Financial ratchets are also starting to move ahead.

At COP26, there were fringe activities in particular about legal changes that are likely to come forward. I spoke on a panel about stopping ecocide, which involves a significant international campaign to give legal rights to the environment. That would start to impact on people's bottom lines and make them think a bit harder about how seriously they take the issue.

For me, one of the issues is long-term certainty so that people know that this is the direction of travel and are confident that they are going in the right direction. Another issue is scrutiny. More than that, though, the issue that pops out of all of this is sense checking. One of the concerns is to ensure that the climate is being considered in all decision making. There is still room for more knowledge about the climate on every board in Scotland, and that is something that we need to look at.

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): I am reflecting on what you said, Mike Robinson, about the opportunity to take particular sectors and develop a protocol. I think that you mentioned that in relation to cement. I would be interested to hear you explore that a bit more with the committee. My sense of COP was that the process was not ideal. What happened on the Saturday, in particular, with the watering down of texts and some of the geopolitics around that, was deeply worrying. One of my children watched it and found the response from other countries, such as Switzerland, incredible. It seems that a more diplomatic effort is needed in the run-up to COPs. I am interested in whether you envisage protocols or initiatives for particular sectors in the run-up to COPs.

Aligned to that, could we have some reflections from both of you on the various high-ambition alliances that are emerging? There seemed to be more of an informal multilateralism at this COP. The Costa Ricans have been very prominent in the development of alliances around nature, and there are also the High Ambition Coalition and the Beyond Oil & Gas Alliance. I am interested in the architecture of all of that, and what can happen alongside COP that can feed into much more ambition at future COPs.

Mike Robinson: I guess that there are lots of different responses to that. First, there are a number of issues that we know need to be resolved. Arguably, one of the most successful climate agreements until now has been the Montreal protocol. The protocol was not really intended to be a climate agreement, of course—it was about the removal of CFCs from the atmosphere to prevent the depletion of the ozone layer. However, it was achieved relatively quickly and actually made a difference. Although it did not make the whole difference, it was much easier to deliver because it was a discrete piece of work on an immediate need. There is a sense that certain aspects of climate can be taken out and, instead of being left sitting on the table and conflated with all the other issues that are there, they can be dealt with separately.

There were anxieties about COP, and there was disappointment about the way in which some of the language was watered down. It is frustrating to see that, and easy to point fingers. Equally, though, there are a number of commitments that people are just not delivering against, so this is about giving people political space to do those sorts of things. It is really important that there is leadership in this arena. There are huge opportunities around leadership and we need to start looking at all the different mechanisms for building relationships with the progressive countries.

It might not be obvious, but that could even involve organisations such as mine. We are a tiny charity based in Perth, but we are part of the international geographical community, so our connections on self diplomacy are enormous, and we can reach really quite interesting people across the world. We just need to start using all of those sorts of mechanisms to share examples, problems and expertise, because everybody is on this journey. Some are very reluctant—Australia is right at the back of the queue—and some, for

example this country, Sweden and Costa Rica, are towards the front, but we still have a long way to go. We must start building soft alliances—I genuinely believe that there is a real opportunity there.

Cement is an obvious example, because it is a discrete area of work. Part of the reason why cement is problematic is because it is 7 per cent of emissions because the process is very heat-intensive. Ironically, standards are high in Australia, but the standard for the strength of cement is how much portland it has in it. There are alternatives to portland, so let us take those sorts of issues off the table and find a different mechanism to deal with them separately. The progressive alliances are probably the first port of call to move that forward.

Professor Reay: It is a very good question. If I had to list my successes from COP26, they would include things that were not in any of the formal texts, such as the pact. They would be alliances around certain issues. The deforestation pact made in week 1 was broad and deep, in that it dealt with additional finance and recognised that if we are to reduce or stop deforestation, we need to work with the communities that are already protecting those forests. We have seen such commitments before in relation to deforestation, but that one spoke volumes by recognising what a huge source of emissions deforestation is and how working on the ground locally is necessary if we want to address it.

The global methane pledge was another one. China, which is one of the major emitters, and Russia did not sign up to it, but the US led a dialogue between the US and China on methane. That spoke volumes to me, because, as you know, methane is a powerful greenhouse gas that causes huge damage to air quality, so there are huge benefits to reducing it. It also gives us a bit of a lever for rapid reductions in the rate of warming, because it is short-lived.

For those kinds of outcomes, it depends on how you take the spin. Some are saying that they mean that an extra 0.2ºC has been shaved off the warming this century. Analysis that is probably more robust suggests that it is 0.1ºC, but that is significant because it is equivalent to a big emitter coming through with a substantially increased commitment in its NDC.

As Mike Robinson said, those kinds of mechanisms are an important part of COP. They are wrapped up in it, but they allow coalitions to come together and do stuff that, in theory, is faster and certainly more robust in terms of identifying who is going to do what, rather than people getting wrapped up in how they can get out of doing something or going for the lowest common denominator.

To be honest, some of the outcomes were disappointing, and Mark Ruskell's point about diplomacy in the run-up to COP is a very good one. The UK Government had its target areas such as cars and coal. On cars, the commitment that was made by the coalition that was brought together was fairly underwhelming. However, as I said, there were notable successes with deforestation and methane, and, as Mike said, cement might be another example that we will see coming through.

It speaks to the frustration of the nation states and to what they want to see happen through the UN process. These kinds of coalitions provide a way to take action that does not need to go all the way to Alok Sharma's gavel at the end.

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): I have a brief question. Mike Robinson, you said that the private sector will respond more quickly to the situation. What ought Governments to do to get out of the way of the private sector providing that innovation and/or to promote it doing that? For example, should the Government provide a stable long-term investment environment?

Mike Robinson: The private sector wants consistency and clarity of direction more than anything else, and it needs to know that that direction will be in place for a period of time. How does that translate? Some of the previous energy initiatives, such as the feed-in tariffs and renewable heat incentives did not stay around long enough to have the full impact that they could have had; that also goes for some of the grants and discounts and other interventions.

If the Government were to take a more long-term view, with consistency and commitment for a minimum period of probably 15 to 20 years, it would give certainty and that would allow private organisations to reposition themselves behind it. It was only three years ago that I had a meeting with international financiers who said that they were surprised that coal had become uninvestable. The signals that COP gave on coal, methane and other things are important because they will trigger sensitivities in the market and in longer-term investment by business. Business will react to them quickly, as long as it is clear what the solutions are.

10:30

There are two or three reasons why we have not seen more of a shift. One of them is simply that businesses are not always clear what to move into and what to back. Sometimes a lack of certainty and clarity on solutions holds businesses back. The other thing that holds businesses back is that they perceive making the shift as costing them and it never costs them to destroy the environment.

We absolutely have to change that through financial or legal mechanisms. That is why I was excited by the growing momentum around some of the legalities of the matter. That has an important purpose.

I hope that that has answered the question.

Liam Kerr: Yes, I am grateful.

Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab): I was pleased to hear Mike Robinson mention the ecocide events that happened alongside COP. I had the chance to attend some of them.

I am thinking about what he and Professor Reay said about the opportunity for Scotland to lead the way and build progressive alliances. What role can Scotland play in the journey towards an ecocide law? I declare an interest as someone who is considering a member's bill. Could Scotland play a role in that space on the climate and nature emergency?

Mike Robinson: Yes, 100 per cent. The message of COP is that, sometimes, you can get lost in what you are doing and cannot see the bigger picture. During COP, it came home to me strongly that what is going on in Scotland is well understood internationally and is important.

We are not the only ones; other countries are also doing good things. The Belgians have been seriously considering adopting an ecocide law. I would love the Parliament to adopt ecocide into legislation in some form. However, an interesting and important point is that that indicates the momentum in the discussion. As the issue becomes more urgent, not only are most commitments ratcheting up but the teeth are starting to kick in. There will start to be financial and legal mechanisms and penalties.

What I found encouraging about COP was that the momentum on many of those issues feels like it is almost reaching a tipping point. I know from speaking to the ecocide team that the international momentum on that is very strong. They are looking for adoption at different levels of government to help to drive the momentum on the international stage. Having a law on ecocide sitting alongside those on genocide and war crimes would give certainty that it is not an acceptable way to behave. That is long overdue.

Professor Reay: We will remain under a lot of scrutiny as a nation. What we are doing on our land use and agriculture policy is linked to ecocide. Mike Robinson and I have talked about that a lot, and I know that committee members have, too.

We are transitioning out of the common agricultural policy and our natural capital in Scotland is huge but, like other nations, we face many competing interests, such as how that natural capital is protected and how it best benefits livelihoods, and the transition to net zero and how resilient it is. We are having to do that work ahead of some other nations, particularly developing nations, but also many developed world partners. They will do it, but they will look at how Scotland is doing it to see whether we can realise a just transition for rural communities and realise our carbon targets as well as protecting and enhancing biodiversity.

To me, it is a source of great pride that nations look at Scotland and the great practice that we have, but I also fear that we might make big mistakes or go too slowly and that, through that, other nations will not take action or will be scared away. They might look at peatland restoration, for example, and say, "Scotland is trying to do that, but the rate is too slow and it's just stuck in the mire".

Scotland has quite a responsibility, not just given our historical emissions and the enlightenment, but in relation to our progress on climate change, the climate change plan and our targets. We have to show the world our successes in all their glory, but also our failures and mistakes. We have to explain how they happened so that other nations, big and small, can make the same transition, and more quickly than most of them are currently committed to doing.

Monica Lennon: I want to pick up on what Professor Reay said about fear. There are some tough and brave decisions for politicians to make. Earlier, you said that COP26 was the most science-based COP that there has been. I wonder where the science will take us by the time we get to COP27.

Do you think that leaders, including Scotland's First Minister, have been on a journey during COP26? Last week, the First Minister said in Parliament that projects such as Cambo should not go ahead. That decision appears to reflect the science, but politically it is probably quite difficult to say. Does that movement in the position send out a message to the leaders of other parties that we have to get with the science? Does it mean that there will be space for people to change their minds on long-standing positions?

Professor Reay: I hope so. The sixth assessment report of Jim Skea's mitigation group will be out before the next COP. I think that it is due in the early part of next year, along with the impacts and adaptation report, and the science that underpins climate action—not just mitigation, but adaptation as well—will be loud and clear. I hope that there will be time to incorporate some of the outcomes from COP26 into those analyses. That base should be very strong.

There is a lot of talk about how courageous heads of state, Parliaments, members and Governments have to be. It is the time to be courageous, because time is so short and the changes must be so big. It is a monumental shift. We know that, when we have made such big changes in the past, it has gone horribly wrong. We still bear the scars from deindustrialisation in the UK and in Scotland. Other nations bear those scars, too, and still other nations have seen them and decided that they do not want them. We need to be brave about making those changes in the context of the pandemic and the electoral cycle. However, the context is also the climate emergency, and being timid just will not cut it or take us to where we need to go.

One of the events that I attended at COP26 was a meeting with a congressional delegation from the United States House Select Committee on the Climate Crisis, which is a committee that the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee should talk to. The committee members talked about what they had gathered about what we are doing in Scotland and the UK, and they said that it was a breath of fresh air to see that politics is not getting in the way. Some of you might disagree with that, but from their perspective climate change is such a partisan issue.

Going back to why we should be proud in Scotland, if we look at the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 and the progress that has been made in successive sessions of Parliament here, we can see that we have managed to take that courageous view. Politics have largely been sidelined by the need to deal with the climate emergency. I hope that, by continuing along that line, we can show other nations that it can be done, and in a cross-party way, rather than just by winning political points.

Monica Lennon: Thank you. My question was directed at Dave Reay, convener, but Mike Robinson might have something to add.

Mike Robinson: Leadership is vital. I sometimes joke that a courageous politician will soon be an ex-politician. The problem with COP26—and, indeed, one of its failings—was that a lot of the politicians there did not have the majority or permission at home to do some of the stuff that was agreed. With the best will in the world, they might respond to international pressure—as Obama did in Paris, when he signed the agreement, in effect, unilaterally. However, he could not get it through the Senate, and it was very easy to reverse.

This issue should, of course, be beyond politics, and, I hope, with a scientific basis that allows it to be seen as being more objective. However, that is not always the case, and it is important that we spend time and energy on ensuring that people are up to speed with this issue. What I have discovered more and more and what has surprised me is, despite the enormous nature of the subject, how little many people understand the issues around it.

As you will know, Dave Reay and I have produced a climate solutions course and qualification, and we did so purposefully in recognition of the fact that until there is a more universal minimum-level understanding it will be difficult to seek permission on some of the key crunch issues, such as when and how much you use your car, other vehicles or other transport mechanisms, when you just do not travel at all and so on. All of that needs to be underpinned by some understanding, because without that, there is a real danger that it will get increasingly difficult to bring forward legislation.

The other observation about COP26 that I think is worth making is about participation in the marches. First, there were an awful lot of different views among the people on the marches, which was quite entertaining. For example, there was a very well turned out and beautifully dressed pro-nuclear lobby walking in the middle of everyone and 100 yards in front of an anti-nuclear group, which I thought was quite funny.

However, having listened to what people were asking for and speaking about, my fundamental point is that, if we are not careful, there is a real danger of having a massive intergenerational rift. We really need to spend some time patching things up, and older generations have to show clear evidence that they are taking this matter seriously. We are in danger of disappointing a whole generation of people who, from the comments that they were making and chants that they were shouting as they walked around Glasgow, are really angry. They are looking not for small compromises and tweaks but for radical interventions. However, if this is going to work, we have to get the majority supportive or at least permissive of that kind of thing. Although I wish that it were a matter of us shouting at you guys and you changing everything for us, I suspect that we need to do more work to bring the general population with us a bit more, which is why the whole issue of universal education is critical.

Monica Lennon: Thank you both for those helpful remarks.

Fiona Hyslop (Linlithgow) (SNP): Perhaps we can move on from shouting, back to diplomacy. In your answer to Mark Ruskell, you covered some of the issues that I was interested in asking about, but I am particularly interested in the geopolitics of all of this, the challenges that lie ahead with regard to COP27 and what you think needs to happen in that respect.

In your very good submission, Professor Reay, you talk about the importance of just transition and what Scotland can contribute to that, but you also highlight the US-South Africa coal agreement, which I do not think got as much domestic coverage in the United Kingdom as it might have done. Could you unpack that a bit? I also wonder whether the two of you have some reflections on the role of India, China and Russia in what happened at COP26 and, more important, what that might mean going forward.

Lastly, I would like to hear some comments on the UN being the essence of multilateralism. A whole load of parallel multilateralist approaches that are being taken by business, cities, the Under2 Coalition and so on have been highlighted. Perhaps Mike Robinson can talk about the geopolitical issues in that light.

10:45

Professor Reay: The South Africa funding, which was more than $8 billion, included the UK, but the US was the main contributor. It did not get much coverage, but it was really important. It signified what needs to happen in terms of that flow of finance from the north to the global south to allow the transition away from fossil fuels and high carbon—the transition was away from coal in that case. It was part of something that I think we will see a lot more of.

Nigeria has big commitments to decarbonise, and it has annual budgets for carbon like those we have in Scotland. However, linking to what Mike Robinson was saying, the context in all of those nations is that the issue is highly politically sensitive. People may find that it is affecting their lives negatively, that prices go up and so on, and huge numbers of livelihoods depend on those industries. In South Africa, for instance, 300,000 jobs are dependent on the coal industry. The funding is recognition by the US and others that we cannot expect those nations just to switch off coal without support to achieve that just transition.

There are parallels in Scotland, where roughly 100,000 people are dependent on the oil and gas sector. We cannot expect the US to give us $8 billion to help with our just transition, because we are a rich nation, but we need to make sure that it is properly funded domestically. Investment is needed in job creation and the stuff that Jim Skea's commission is focused on but also through things such as the climate emergency skills action plan. All of those mechanisms will be crucial for the just transition here. It comes back to our being an exemplar. We are linked to the just transition not only in terms of the phrase but through the reality of how it is done and how the principles are applied.

The question of India and China and the change to phasing down, rather than phasing out, coal is an interesting one. It might be seen as them flexing their political muscles and showing who really holds the power now, internationally, and there probably was an element of that, but it also speaks to the reality of the domestic situation in India and the reliance on coal. However, it was not just that. G77 nations supported it—India and China.

I am very much a glass half full person, so getting anything about the phasing down of coal and fossil fuels into the cover text was still a breakthrough in the context of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. I see it as progress, but, as Mark Ruskell said, in the way that it was presented—we all saw Alok Sharma's face as he took that on board—it was not the progress that we would want. A full commitment to phasing out coal and fossil fuels is what we need to get to. Nevertheless, it was progress.

The point about COP27 is a good one. The context will be very different from Glasgow, because it will be in Egypt, which can, in many ways, be counted as a developed economy although it is representing the continent of Africa. It was always going to be an African COP for the very good reason that the continent is a key area because of its huge and young population. If we do not manage what is being tried in South Africa, in terms of moving away from fossil fuel or leapfrogging, we will have no chance of meeting the Paris climate goals.

Also, Africa is already the crucible for climate change impacts. We have not talked much about loss and damage, but that will be a key issue for COP27. Whatever form the dialogue takes in the run-up to COP27, it must lead to a mechanism that allows financial flows such as Scotland has committed to—as the first nation actually to put money up. It is a drop in the ocean in terms of what loss and damage actually demands, but it will be a key part of our fair share of meeting our climate change commitments.

I think that the loss and damage agenda will dominate discussions at COP27. In that context, the discussion of the transition away from fossil fuels by the big powers such as India and China—the just transition element—will also be loud.

Mike Robinson: One problem is that what India did to water down the text on the last day of COP26 was partly exacerbated by a lack of consistency by the west, particularly in putting funding on the table. The promise of $100 billion has been there for a decade and has not materialised yet, which has left wiggle room for people to move out of the way.

A key lesson is that we need consistency in the decisions that we make and throughout all our decision-making processes. We do not always get that right and we are not as good at joined-up thinking as we could be, and such consistency does not happen often on the international stage in the way that it should. A good example comes from Cambo. Anything such as that is an obvious Achilles' heel when a person stands up and tries to project moral authority to other people internationally.

There are significant alliances and possibilities. The issue of loss and damage, which Dave Reay mentioned, provides an interesting example. We sponsored the Inuit Circumpolar Council to send representatives to Glasgow, and there is a huge conversation to be had just in Canada, which is reluctant to move along the loss and damage line although it has citizens who are directly impacted and who merit such support. The approach changes the dynamic of the community's ability to talk in Canada, and it will give other communities more leverage and more authority to be at the table. It is critical to note that even small gestures make a big difference.

A lot of this comes down to leadership, which requires boldness—although people must support that, otherwise it is short-term boldness that does not achieve anything—and long-term consistency throughout all the things that we do. Somebody who is much cleverer than me once said that we judge a Government by its budgets, not by its rhetoric. There is still an awful lot of space for us to show more commitment, to prove that we are serious about this stuff.

Globally, the momentum will be inevitable, so we need to get on board. With those who are not on board, there is a role for Scotland, because we are ahead of others, although we still have a way to go. Why should we not use our influence to help countries such as the US, Canada, Australia and even New Zealand to accelerate what they are doing and to take some fear out of it for them? That would be utterly invaluable.

Fiona Hyslop: I agree completely that Scotland could play such an international role. In my previous role, I saw directly the impact of that. We should never underestimate the influence that Scotland can have. We were the first to have a climate justice fund, however small it was, and the first to have a loss and damage fund, however small it is.

My next question, which could be quite boring, is about the Paris rulebook. It was a success that it was completed, but who will police it? Who will ensure that all the targets and the transparency happen? Is the UN mechanism strong enough to do that? Will it be ready to do what it needs to do before COP27?

Professor Reay: The question is really good. We come back a little to the question about updating commitments for next year—2022. It is good that it was made clear that not every nation has the same capacity to report and measure its emissions or even the technical ability to put information into the spreadsheets consistently. The UN will provide support: there is an overt mechanism that allows all nations to draw on support and obtain training. The capacity-building element of the Paris rulebook is crucial, because all 197 parties have different levels of capacity. That element is encouraging.

Linked to that, the other thing in the rulebook that I found really encouraging is around market-based solutions. One of the things that is committed to in article 6 and the support around that is enabling projects that support the right of communities of indigenous peoples that are affected to go to an independent body with their grievances and complain—for example, to say, "They have come along and thrown us out of our forest, and now they're claiming it for carbon benefits." Rather than having to take that to a domestic Government body, they can take it to an independent body. That was a crucial element in terms of capacity and mechanisms, which will make the Paris agreement and the nationally determined contributions work in an equitable way. It is not perfect, but it is definitely progress.

Mike Robinson: So much of it is voluntary through the United Nations, which is why it is so important that some of this translates to legislative change and financial penalties and incentives—it should not just be penalties. That is absolutely critical in embedding the rulebook. That will be done only through alliances and initially progressive nations forming alliances.

We need some consistent rules in place to ensure that we deliver against it and so that, every year at COP, people do not just hold up their hands and apologise because they did not bother to do what they said they would do the previous year. That is why frameworks such as ecocide and national legislation around that are really important.

There is also a scrutiny issue; it is not just about joined-up thinking and ensuring that climate considerations are in our decision making. We must make sure that financial mechanisms support the right thing and do not encourage the wrong thing. There is a need for scrutiny and sense checking what is coming forward. The closest thing that there is to that on the global stage at the moment is The Elders, which is a group of former statespeople from around the world. Their status allows them to be that little bit more holistic and above politics. Even domestically, there is a role for that. We have

talked about a future generations commissioner or a format whereby somebody helps to provide scrutiny—the Parliament obviously has a strong role in that.

On finance, I would love us to be a bit more ambitious about funding some of this—for example, through the establishment of a future generations fund that is a bit like the Norwegian sovereign wealth fund. Domestically and internationally, we have to find mechanisms to fund the change or it will struggle.

Liam Kerr: It is important to follow the science. If we accept that, by 2050, there will still be a major demand for oil and gas in the UK, as the Climate Change Committee has said, what does the science suggest that we do to satisfy that demand while minimising the climate impact?

Professor Reay: The International Energy Agency broke new ground with its statement on modelling what will get us to 1.5° and the Paris agreement, which is no investment in new oil and gas or in coal. In that context, we must look at where the UK needs to get to in meeting our net zero target of 2050 and at our oil and gas demand, and we must consider how quickly we can phase it out—not just phase it down, but phase it out. That always has to be done in the context of what is happening globally.

There is a parallel in agriculture whereby, if we stopped producing food in order to stop emissions from its production, we would still have to import food. We have to face the question of where the atmosphere would see the benefit if we stopped oil and gas production tomorrow but had to import it because we still needed it. The answer is that there would be no benefit—we would be offshoring the problem. However, that should not prevent us from going really hard at withdrawing from our dependence on fossil fuels and ensuring that we comply with that IEA scenario of not opening up new extraction of oil and gas.

11:00

The political reality of COP26 was that there was a lot of emphasis on coal, and many nations that have already moved away from coal are saying that we need everyone to move away from coal. That is quite right from the scientific perspective, but it is easily said when you no longer rely on coal.

We are in that position now with oil and gas, but it is hard for us to say that we need to get away from oil and gas, because we still depend on it for 100,000 jobs and huge revenues. It is a huge part of our economy, but that should not prevent us from making the difficult decisions about phasing it out as rapidly as possible in the global context of not offshoring its associated emissions and of the IEA saying that we should not invest in new oil and gas as well as coal.

Liam Kerr: Thank you for that. I put the same question to Mike Robinson, and I might add to it. In addressing the question, Professor Reay has, in effect, equated the oil and gas industry with jobs and energy generation. However the Climate Change Committee says that there will still be demand for oil and gas in 2050, not just because of energy generation but because of the uses of oil and gas in plastics and so on. The fact is that we are still going to need oil and gas in 2050.

Going back to the question that Professor Reay alluded to, where will we get that from? We will either get it locally or import it, as Professor Reay pointed out. What does the science suggest is the best way to minimise the climate impact until 2050?

Mike Robinson: It is hard to say that the science has a categorical answer to that, because some of it is about choices. As Dave Reay pointed out, the IEA made a strong statement that there is no requirement for new oil and gas. We already know about enough of it and where it is.

We already import quite a lot of oil, and that will not necessarily change. That might be just what we have to do. Equally, that does not necessarily take account of some of the things that we might see moving forward more rapidly as price mechanisms and triggers change. In the future, there will be an awful lot more recycling, particularly of plastics, than has been done in the past.

We can make a lot of innovative interventions, but the question of where we buy the oil from is not a scientific decision. That is not a science call, quite honestly. Either you import it or you try to produce it yourself, which is what you are alluding to, I think. However, if we stick within the IEA's guidelines that there is no need for new oil, it will depend on whether we have any left.

Jackie Dunbar (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP): Most of my points have probably been covered already, especially those about what Scotland should be doing.

Looking inwards, therefore, what do you think the Scottish Parliament should be doing? You have already said that putting politics to the side would be a good start and that decisions need to be made, but I would like you to dig down a bit further and give me your views.

Also, what expert advice should the Scottish Parliament be tapping into?

Professor Reay: I have already said that I think your committee's upcoming inquiry will be spot on in looking at local government and cross-sectoral partners in terms of delivering net zero.

As for specifics, I am sure that you have discussed this already, but I think that the role of public bodies should be looked at as part of this. That is my advice, but I think that it is crucial, and it echoes what Mike Robinson was saying earlier. What capacity do local government, public bodies, the cities, the towns and other things on that local scale have to deliver resilient net zero? We have talked about some of the small developing states not having the capacity to report effectively under the Paris agreement, but we, too, need that capacity for action at the local level. It is therefore important for your committee and the Parliament to ensure that that capacity is there, and if it is not, to ask the right questions about how that work can be taken forward.

There are exemplars in that respect, such as Scottish Water, which I work with a lot and which I think is a really good example of a public body that has wrestled with these issues. It has expanded its reporting duties to cover scope 3 or indirect emissions, and the question is whether local authorities have the capacity to do the same. I know that you have talked a lot about procurement, planning, transport and adaptation. All those things come back to the place-based approach for which Scotland is famous, but is there the capacity to cover them? I do not mean in the central belt, where we might have the equivalent of a rich country's capacity to do such stuff; I mean across the whole of Scotland. We need to take a whole-nation approach to this.

My wish list for Parliament would also include the conveners group and all the committees talking a lot about climate change. After all, this is a whole-economy and whole-society issue, and your scrutiny role must be well joined up to ensure that there are no gaps through which parts of the economy or our society can fall. That, too, would undermine a sustainable transition to net zero.

Finally, going back to the question of where you can find expertise, I would point out that the Committee on Climate Change will give its latest progress report on Scotland in a week or so, and that should be a really good source of information on where it sees progress being made. I am still really keen to have a Scottish committee on climate change. I hope that that will happen, because it will give us the more focused and granular information that we need.

You are probably doing this already, so you will forgive me if I am teaching grandmother to suck eggs, but you should also be talking to other committees around the world. The Committee on Climate Change is a good example of a COP. For a start, it launched the international climate council network, in which various nations show how independent advice is being given to Governments. From the committee's perspective, it would be good to talk to your equivalents in the US and other nations, even at subnational level, to share mistakes, successes and challenges. In Scotland, we always punch above our weight in so many ways, and one key way is how we share our knowledge and the progress that we are making. As I have said several times—I said it to Fiona Hyslop—climate change might be one of our biggest responsibilities but it is also the area where we can have the most substantial positive impact.

I know that all of you have too much work already, but good communication and collaboration will be vital in helping other nations do what I hope Scotland is already starting to do.

Jackie Dunbar: Thank you. Mike, would you like to add anything?

Mike Robinson: I do not have a huge amount to add. There has to be some political scrutiny of Government departments, because I still do not think that things are as joined up as they could or should be, or that the responsibility is shared as it could or should be. In certain areas, there is still too much of a sense that this is someone else's job. Therefore, we need scrutiny of the commitments that are being made in budgets and by public bodies and Government departments, as well as scrutiny of public procurement. It is obvious that there needs to be a sense check across the board.

Climate change should also be represented in some way by someone on every committee and board in Scotland, but that would probably require more universal education.

As Dave Reay said, there is another role to play, which concerns the lessons that the Parliament has learned. The Parliament has shown leadership in this area, and other Parliaments are interested in the processes that have been undergone to achieve that. It is worth looking at the international arena to share those lessons more broadly.

Jackie Dunbar: You said that some countries are dragging their heels and that we need to be taking out some of the fear. With that in mind, how can the Scottish Parliament help to support and develop international best practices?

Mike Robinson: The first thing to do is to find ways to share them. We have strong alliances in many places, although some are informal—that is maybe not so much the case with Iran, Kazakhstan and Russia, but we have very strong relationships and connections with Australia, Canada and the US. We can take the opportunity to say that we have taken some of this on board and we are still here—it has not caused massive problems, and we are still in a process. Implementing that approach in those societies and

communities probably requires us to look to all the different avenues that we have. We have a lot of connections through business and the NGO community, and there are cultural connections as well as parliamentary ones. We need to look at leadership and support in all those arenas. We should just recognise that we have a positive role to play in encouraging them on to, and nurturing them along, this necessary journey, and in influencing them, using the levers at our disposal.

Jackie Dunbar: Would David Reay like to add anything?

Professor Reay: I think that we have covered it all, although I would like to add that one of the capacity issues is going to involve the committee's time. Looking at the committees across Parliament, I think that it is clear that yours will be in the hot seat over the coming years. SPICe is great, and I hope that you are getting good advice from all our great universities and academic institutions, but you are going to need that, as well as plenty of capacity to deal with all the stuff that you need to look at. It will be worth it if we have that comprehensive scrutiny that Mike Robinson alluded to.

The Convener: Mark Ruskell will come in—briefly, please.

Mark Ruskell: Do the witnesses have any brief reflections on what remains of the UK presidency in the run-up to COP27? What do you see as the key milestones or objectives that the UK needs to aim for?

Also, what about the linkage with the biodiversity COP? We saw some significant text in the Glasgow pact on biodiversity and the nature emergency, but what do you think alignment with COP15 on biodiversity should look like?

Professor Reay: I will pitch in quickly on the UK presidency, which will run until the beginning of November next year. For me, the most important job that the UK has is to realise that $100 billion a year in climate finance, which it failed to do in 2020 and now in 2021. A plan is in place to reach the equivalent of that by going above $100 billion a year by, I think, 2023, and the UK very much needs to deliver on that.

That was one of the failures before COP even started and, as Mike Robinson was saying, it clouded a lot of the discussions. It probably was a factor in the agreement to phase down rather than phase out, and people really need to know all that. As I have said, a lot of good stuff came out of COP26—some of it was down to the UK presidency and a lot of it was down to other nations' efforts as well—but that $100 billion needs to be delivered.

Mark Ruskell: Do you have any thoughts on the biodiversity COP?

11:15

Professor Reay: I know that the committee talked to Jim Skea about that last week. It is not brand new, but it was good to see overt recognition at COP26 of the crucial link between the nature crisis and the climate crisis. A whole suite of nature-based solutions got a lot of attention at COP26 and will continue to do so. Phase 2 for Kunming will very much be in the context of the reports from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services.

Again, this is glass half full—you know what I am like—but there are so many synergies in how we address those twin global challenges. However, there are also the antagonisms and issues that we have seen in relation to reduced emissions from deforestation and degradation, and how that all fits into things such as carbon markets and safeguarding people's human rights. It is nice that conversations are happening and the issues are being linked together. It is also really good that the full "Sixth Assessment Report" from the climate side coincides with both COPs. We are on a good trajectory there.

Mike Robinson: The critical thing, of course, is that we do not relinquish the chair until next November. We should use the full 12 months and not just the two weeks of COP.

There is a general sense that biodiversity is being left behind a wee bit. There is absolutely nowhere near the same amount of focus on the biodiversity COP as there has been on the climate change COP and yet, to a degree, they are twin crises. It is critical that we give biodiversity the fuel of publicity, talk about it more and tackle it more head on. Signals are really important while we retain the chair, and making the connections is really critical.

Ultimately, I would love us to use the next few months to create more of a challenge. I agree with Dave Reay that we have got to get the £100 billion commitment, because otherwise it would be too easy to say, "The west isn't doing what it should be doing, so why should anyone else?" I would love us to use the months ahead to try to make a challenge to Egypt, so that we put our Glasgow demands to Sharm el-Sheikh and use the whole of the 12 months and not just the two weeks.

The Convener: That brings us to the end of our allotted time. Thank you both for taking time out of your busy schedules, and for sharing your excellent insights into some of the outcomes of COP26 and what we have to look forward to as a

committee. I use the phrase “look forward to” in relation to the positive challenge that you have laid out, not just for the committee but for the Scottish Parliament in general.

Thank you again, and enjoy the rest of your day.

11:17

Meeting suspended.

11:23

On resuming—

The Convener: I am pleased to welcome our second panel of witnesses: Teresa Anderson, climate policy co-ordinator at ActionAid International and co-ordinator of the Climate Action Network working group on agriculture; Mary Church, head of campaigns at Friends of the Earth Scotland; and Jess Pepper, founding director of Climate Café. Thank you very much for joining the committee to look at the outcomes of COP26.

I understand that Jess Pepper and Teresa Anderson would like to make short opening statements.

Jess Pepper (Climate Café): Good morning, and thank you for the invitation to speak to the committee this morning.

I want to explain the perspective that I can bring to the committee. I am not an expert on all the technical aspects of a COP; my perspective is very much more from the community angle, and from working with people in the lead-up to and throughout COP26.

Climate Café is a grass-roots initiative that creates space for communities to have their own conversations about climate change and to take action. Those spaces can be created in communities, but also on campuses and in workplaces. In the run-up to COP26, we worked with the climate reality project international network and the climate crisis film festival to create those spaces.

In the run-up to COP26, but also around Glasgow, we worked with communities in public spaces and online to connect communities across Scotland with communities around the world to engage in a dialogue about COP and what was going on in Glasgow. That was partly because it was the fourth COP in the global north, and it was important to create a space in which to have that dialogue and to include people who could bring a perspective from the global south.

I do not claim to be representing all climate cafes—those spaces are unique in respect of their people and the places where they happen—but I hope to contribute as someone who is informed by the conversations that have been going on over the past few months and the conversations throughout COP26. I can comment on some of the observations that were made about what was going on inside the room and bring a perspective from outside the main negotiations, if that would be helpful to the committee.

The Convener: Thank you for that helpful introduction.

Teresa Anderson (ActionAid International): Thank you for inviting ActionAid International to the discussion. I will focus my introductory remarks on two issues: loss and damage, and net zero.

At COP26, more than ever before, citizens from Scotland, the UK, Europe and the world told their Governments clearly that they wanted to see the UNFCCC providing support to people who need to recover and rebuild in the aftermath of climate disasters. The public understand that climate action means that we cannot leave the women and girls, the smallholder farmers, and the indigenous peoples on the front lines of the climate crisis to deal with the problem on their own.

Every developing country, representing the vast majority of humanity, called for the UNFCCC to finally address that critical gap. Governments at the COP really began to feel that pressure and to talk seriously about the need for a funding facility to address loss and damage.

We welcomed the Scottish Government’s initiative in announcing a modest £1 million symbolic contribution to a loss and damage fund to get the ball rolling and help to build pressure on the wealthier countries to acknowledge their responsibility. Given the expectation and pressure that built on that issue, we were hugely disappointed that the US did not, in the end, budge, but we were really heartened that many more countries budged after hearing the pressure from their citizens. You can be sure that the issue of loss and damage will be central to the climate talks at COP27 in Egypt next year.

Another notable aspect of COP26 was the flurry of announcements on initiatives that were made by Governments and corporations. In some ways, that noise felt designed to distract from the lack of real commitments in NDCs, the lack of real climate finance, and the lack of real movement in negotiations. Although some announcements were meaningful, many of them came with little paperwork to scrutinise, and a lot of them were outright greenwash. There was a mishmash of different initiatives with no real criteria or standards that were hard to assess.

It is really worrying that so many net zero climate targets are full of carbon offsets and are

set to deliver only 30 years from now. If we add up all the offsets that are hidden in the hundreds or thousands of net zero targets that have been declared by Governments and corporations, we realise that there is not enough land or technological capacity to offset all the emissions from the fossil fuels that continue to be dug up from underground. The maths of net zero do not add up yet. We need Governments, parliamentarians, leaders and all of you to start the urgent conversation on the radical transformations and just transitions that are needed to avert runaway climate breakdown by bringing emissions down to real zero.

The Convener: Thank you. Mary Church would also like to make an opening statement.

Mary Church (Friends of the Earth Scotland): Thank you for inviting Friends of the Earth Scotland to this evidence session. I listened to the evidence at your previous meeting, and I half listened to the first panel this morning. I will open with a few things that add to that.

Our view at Friends of the Earth Scotland—it is also the view of the Friends of the Earth International federation—is that COP26 will be remembered as an historic failure to close the gap on 1.5°C, in which countries that are responsible for causing the climate crisis continued the pattern of trying to shift the burden of responsibility for solving it on to the shoulders of the poorest countries.

11:30

We heard from earlier speakers about challenges in the COP process. To unblock the on-going tensions that are at the heart of the UNFCCC process, the rich historical polluters—including and especially the UK, with the COP presidency—needed to come to the table in Glasgow with political will and concrete policies to do their fair share of climate action. However, despite the ever-increasing urgency and the code red for humanity, we saw instead that such countries came to the table with nothing or very little that was new, particularly in relation to the urgently needed climate finance. Those countries blocked and delayed finance for loss and damage, and they pushed through loopholes to allow themselves to keep polluting while giving the illusion of acting. Examples of that are the language on having a global goal of net zero around the mid-century and the deal on carbon markets.

We heard about the inclusion of language on fossil fuels in the Glasgow pact, which has been hailed as historic. It is historic in that it is a first in the UNFCCC's history, but the language is incredibly weak, not least because it focuses on coal and largely ignores oil and gas. Again, that places the greater onus on poorer countries to act and shifts the burden of responsibility.

I will touch briefly on what will happen next and how outcomes from the COP need to be translated into Scotland. After 26—actually 27—COPs, it is pretty clear that change is not really achieved at that level; it is local and national policies here in Scotland and in every nation around the world that will turn around the climate crisis. The important thing that Scotland can do is get on with implementing policies at home to cut emissions and deliver a just transition. Crucial to that is revisiting and strengthening the climate change plan, so that we have a robust and credible road map for meeting our 2030 targets.

The Convener: Thank you for your opening remarks, which have provided a good context for our questions.

The previous panel said that COP26 had a number of positive outcomes but also a number of gaps, which the current panel has highlighted. As we transition and look ahead to COP27 and the remainder of the UK's presidency, what are the critical items that must be on the agenda and actioned ahead of and at COP27? The witnesses have touched on some, but it would be great to hear further thoughts about the gaps that remain and the urgent actions that are required.

Teresa Anderson: The key priorities in preparation for COP27 are moving on loss and damage and on finance. The vast majority of humanity is asking desperately for loss and damage to be addressed. The context is that there is climate finance for transitioning to greener pathways and for adapting to future impacts but, if a place is hit by cyclones, floods, droughts or rising sea levels, the current system says, "Sorry—you're on your own." That is completely unacceptable.

It was remarkable to see the pressure that built and to see countries shifting during the COP26 process. Scotland's initiative was welcome; we welcome Scotland's continued leadership and strengthening of that. However, the US continued to be the blockage. In all the talk about alliances and global diplomacy, dealing with loss and damage must be a key part.

On climate finance, if we want to unlock global progress and movement on cross-cutting issues—if we want global language that applies to all on matters such as the sticky issue of coal and fossil fuels—that must be underpinned by a system that works for all. The climate finance that is being delivered fails to meet the $100 billion target that was set 10 years ago. That target was pretty much plucked out of thin air by wealthier countries and was not based on a needs assessment, and it is

hugely insufficient. The majority—71 per cent—of the funds that are coming through the climate finance system are in the form of loans.

The real funds that are coming through to help countries to recover, adapt and transition are still peanuts. We are putting a huge and unrealistic burden on the global south and unfair expectations on mitigation without the follow-up of finance. That was the issue that underpinned the last hours of COP26, and that was the basis of India's objection to being obliged to take on the changes without having the resources and support to be able to make them. The key issues are loss and damage and finance.

I will say one more thing. If we are serious about the 1.5°C target, it is time to stop imagining that we can solve the problem with small tinkering and carbon offsets. Nothing like the amount of conversation that is needed about the deep, transformative system change is happening. There is an urgent, beyond-time need to talk about the real transformations that are required in our energy, agriculture, transport and construction industry systems. Task forces are needed to think about what the planet has to look like to meet the 1.5°C target and how we can get there. Currently, it feels as though we are starting from where we are rather than starting with the vision and figuring out how to get there.

Mary Church: I agree with Teresa Anderson's comments. Closing the gap on climate finance is essential for COP27. It is important to note—this was partially raised by the previous panel—that the review of NDCs in the year ahead of COP27 is—[*Inaudible*.]—mitigation, so there is no urging or requiring of nations to revisit their climate finance commitments ahead of COP27. That is a real failing of the Glasgow pact and the COP26 outcomes, and it should be revisited by the COP presidency in the year leading up to COP27 in Egypt. I also agree with the comments on loss and damage.

The other key thing is the UK Government and presidency getting its own house in order. It is really important for the presidency to show leadership and, frankly, that is not what we saw in the run-up to COP26. There were real issues around participation at the Glasgow summit and, far from being the most inclusionary COP, as the UK Government claimed that it would be, it was actually one of the most exclusionary COPs that we have ever seen.

Actions that were taken ahead of COP, such as cutting the overseas development aid budget earlier this year and slashing airport passenger duty in the days before the summit opened, as well as the 40 fossil fuel projects that are in the pipeline in the UK—[*Inaudible*.]—approval before 2020, including the highly controversial Cambo oilfield and the Whitehaven coal mine, do not show climate leadership. The UK needs to get its own house in order to show the way to other nations and bring them—particularly global north nations—along.

To expand on the points that I made in my opening statement, what is needed to unblock the UNFCCC processes is rich countries that have done the most to cause the crisis showing how they will do their fair share on climate action. The long-term tensions in the COP process arise around the central questions of equity, historical responsibility and capacity to act. Those questions are at the heart of climate justice.

The Convener: I ask Jess Pepper the same question.

Jess Pepper: There has been plenty of commentary on what was and what was not achieved in the COP26 talks, and it is clear that there is much better and wider awareness that we are not achieving the scale and pace of action that is required to have a chance of staying below 1.5°C of warming or to meet the needs of those who are being impacted most. Now that we have clarity on the urgency and the impacts, communities need to see the commitments that were made in the talks being translated very quickly into action on the ground. We can already hear that conversation building outside the talks. The movement of people is growing in scale and momentum, with new connections, collaborations, learning and insight.

I give credit to the COP26 Coalition and Stop Climate Chaos Scotland, among many other organisations, for connecting communities in a new way, for connecting people across different interests and experiences, and for connecting with people across the world, including people in the global south, who are suffering the impacts on the front line. We are also hearing more from indigenous peoples. All that sharing of experiences, learning and collaboration means that there is greater literacy, understanding, urgency and impatience.

I have been struck that people who had previously engaged with and responded to the climate emergency in their communities in a lighter-touch way are now feeling much more energised to engage in a much more active way. They are questioning how they should be acting. People who might not have felt that they would go out on the streets are now thinking about whether they need to do that. I am noticing and hearing such conversations among a demographic that is older than was previously the case, which has been interesting to observe. That should ensure that consistent action in response to the language, commitments and discussion from COP26 should be delivered within the next year. The public have

an appetite for that. People will not be hanging back and waiting; they will expect, ask about and agitate for that action.

I have noticed a much greater shift in understanding of, and discussion about, climate justice, loss and damage, and our responsibilities. It was interesting to see that discussion gather pace in the world outside COP26 as the talks came to a conclusion. There is a lot to be done over the next year.

An issue that has not had an awful lot of light shed on it for a wider constituency—that might change—is how the process was set up. COP26 was not necessarily as inclusive and accessible as was claimed beforehand, so there is more to come on that. People are asking about that, having got an interest from watching the talks take place so close to home.

The Convener: Each witness has mentioned increasing awareness of climate change. During COP26, I was on a panel with Sir John Curtice, who shared some polling analysis on climate change views in Scotland. He said that the issue is increasingly becoming very important to voters but that voters do not really understand what is involved and what they, as individuals, will be asked to do in order to reach the 2030 and 2045 net zero transition targets. Do you agree that that is the level of understanding about what the actions will involve? What can the Scottish Government and the Parliament do to increase awareness? I ask you to be brief, please. Jess Pepper, given your background, perhaps you can start.

Jess Pepper: There has been a shift, in that a huge number of people want to be involved in the conversation in a way that is appropriate and comfortable for them. People are asking for more information. They are asking how they can make a difference and about the most impactful things that they can do in their lives to make a difference.

There are obviously different needs, challenges and opportunities in every community. The Climate Cafe conversations sometimes generated hyper-local conversations that then connected with wider global conversations. People are sometimes frustrated about the lack of easily accessible information to inform their actions. When information is provided, people say, “How can we make this happen?”

11:45

At one of the Climate Cafes that were held with Glasgow Kelvin College during COP26, people said that they need to see commitment. All the time, we hear about consistency between the promises and rhetoric and the delivery and action. People need to see the commitment and the investment—that comes back to the talk about public spend in the previous panel, as well—and the infrastructure to enable them to make those changes. People want to see that happening. Folk want to take action themselves. It is about how they can do that and about its being possible.

On how the Parliament can help, one of the ways that have come up from the Climate Cafe before, which I think I shared when the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee was considering its green recovery thinking, was that people would like to hear regular updates on where things are at, and to understand where their roles and responsibilities fit. People would welcome a route map, as we had for Covid, for example, that puts in place what was referred to, last week and previously, as a plan, but with all the timetables and resources and milestones in place to ensure that we know where we are going and that we all understand our roles and responsibilities in achieving that. They would welcome regular updates on progress and on how they fit in.

That would flush out where action is being easily achieved and where there is perhaps some confusion, underresourcing or challenge, so that that could be removed and tackled, rather than our allowing it all to accumulate for a year and then discovering that something has been holding up progress all that time. People could feel, “Okay, this is overwhelming but, actually, I get my role in it now and I see where others, such as my local authority or those public bodies or those businesses, are going to play their role as well.” That would make it more accessible, transparent and accountable to people. That seems to be the feedback that we have heard.

Mary Church: Not only do people understand, as Jess Pepper has said, that the reality of the climate crisis is already with us, they are seeing—and experiencing, in some cases—the impacts of the climate crisis that are already here in Scotland. For people in the countries of the global north, it is no longer a case of simply seeing impacts in the most vulnerable countries; the impacts are also here in the relatively insulated global north. They have heard the warnings from the IPCC, in its “Special Report: Global Warming of 1.5°C”—the code red report—earlier this year. They hear loud and clear that climate change is an issue. They want Governments to act and they want the Parliament to act.

I think that people know what the solutions to the climate crisis are, but there is confusion about the lack of clear plans from the Government side about what will be implemented and when. They know that fossil fuels need to be phased out, for example. They know that we need to shift from private car use to public transport and so on, but

they are not seeing concrete plans to deliver on that. That is something that the Government and the Parliament need to deliver on.

It is worth reflecting that, in the code red report, which was published earlier this year, the warning from the IPCC is that we will be reaching 1.5° of warming within the next decade. Only a few years ago, the timescales that we were talking about were all quite far off and, for some of us, perhaps, it felt very safe; we would be happily underground by 2050 and not having to worry about the impacts at that stage. However, to think about the impacts of 1.5° hitting in the next decade, pretty much everyone around this table, whether virtually or in the room, will still be around, and those of us who are in decision-making positions will be held accountable for what we have and have not done to deliver on our climate targets in order to avoid that critical 1.5° threshold.

Teresa Anderson: Individual action, in the absence of Government policy to incentivise the right things, can remain niche, but there is definitely a fruitful and synergistic relationship between public knowledge and expectation and what makes things possible politically. As we saw with the experience around loss and damage and climate justice to which Jess Pepper alluded, people can create change and save space for Governments to move into. It is about creating excitement around just transition and an expectation of delivering on solidarity and climate finance. There is a clear role for civil society in shaping expectations; as we have seen, COP26 has been a huge success in that regard.

There is a role for Government in identifying where subsidies, tariffs and investments can be used. Policies and regulations currently incentivise the wrong type of action and make it harder for individuals to do the right thing. Governments can look at where those can be shifted, and how that can be done through inclusive processes to address inequality and enable change through planning and policies on, for example, reskilling and social protection. There is a synergistic role for Government in that regard, and we should not expect individuals to lead on that without the Government policies in place to make the right things possible.

The Convener: Mark Ruskell has a supplementary in this area, to be followed by Fiona Hyslop.

Mark Ruskell: My question is slightly different. In the final text of the Glasgow pact, there was, for the first time, a recognition of the need for a just transition, but I wonder what the definition of that is. At COP26, I was walking around the blue zone and looking at all the country pavilions. On the one hand, the definition of just transition from the oil and gas-producing states seemed to be about saying, "We'll continue to extract and burn oil and gas because we need it, and we're going to make a just transition by investing in carbon capture and storage and blue hydrogen." On the other hand, some states had formed the Beyond Oil & Gas Alliance, which says that we should phase out oil and gas but do so over time, rather than turning the taps off overnight.

There seem to be many different interpretations of just transition. What are your views on where the global conversation is? Do we have clarity on what a just transition for oil and gas looks like?

Mary Church: The concept of just transition appears a couple of times in the text of the pact. It is not the first time that it has been mentioned—just transition was included in the preamble to the Paris agreement, and pretty much the same language, taken from the Paris text, has been used in the Glasgow pact. In addition, the pact includes language around just transition specifically in relation to fossil fuels; that is the new space in which it comes up. Of course, there has been a lot of scrutiny of that part of the text in terms of its watering down at the last minute.

You are right that the inclusion of just transition in that part of the text, and language such as

"unabated coal ... and inefficient fossil fuel subsidies",

arguably risks the important concept of just transition being used to eke out a continued existence for fossil fuels. It also risks encouraging us to put our faith in false solutions and dangerous distractions such as carbon capture and storage and other such negative emissions technologies.

On what just transition needs to look like, it certainly must, in the view of Friends of the Earth, involve the phase-out of all fossil fuels. That must be global, but it has to happen in an equitable fashion. A lot of the criticism that India and China got for their last-minute interventions, and the perception of the watering down of the text, was really because India was trying to inject a bit of balance and equity back into the text, moving away from the focus on coal.

A report was published by a broad coalition of international civil society groups—the Civil Society Review—and released during COP about what a fair-shares phase-out of fossil fuels would look like globally. We can share the report with the committee after the meeting, if that would be helpful. The report discusses five principles for a fair-shares phase-out, the first of which is to

"phase down global extraction at a pace consistent with ... 1.5°".

That is obvious, because we cannot continue to prioritise fossil fuel profits over the lives of billions of people around the world.

Secondly, the report calls for

"a just transition for workers and communities",

which means the creation of "decent" green jobs, protection of rights and livelihoods, as well as ensuring that unions and workers in affected communities are the "actors" in the shift to zero carbon.

Thirdly, the report calls for curbing

"extraction consistent with environmental justice",

which means that the phase-out should happen first in regions where people and the environment are disproportionately harmed by extraction.

Fourthly—and crucially, in terms of the UK and Scotland as first movers—it calls for reducing

"extraction fastest where doing so will have the least social costs".

Poorer countries and countries where fossil fuels are a disproportionately high part of the economy are much more at risk from an abrupt and shorter-term transition, so rich historical polluters must phase out first. Only 0.01 per cent of UK public revenue comes from fossil fuel extraction, so it is a relatively small part of our economy.

The fifth principle is about sharing the costs of the transition fairly according to the ability to pay, so rich historical polluters should support the phase-out in the global south through the provision of climate finance and technology.

Teresa Anderson: The term "just transition" was developed and lifted up by the unions, so the vast majority of us take it as an approach that puts workers at the centre.

We took the lessons of just transition in fossil fuels and thought about what they would mean when we applied them to agriculture, because we also recognise that we need a shift from polluting, industrialised agricultural systems to ways that work with nature, such as agroecology. In that process, we came up with four principles, which I will share here, because I think that they might help. They are ActionAid principles, but they have had some influence in the sector and other bodies have agreed with them; for example, our colleagues at the International Trade Union Confederation liked that framing, too.

The first principle that we identified is that a just transition needs to address and not exacerbate inequality.

Secondly, a just transition needs to

"transform ... systems to work for people, nature and the climate."

Thirdly, the processes need to be inclusive and participatory. That means including the people who will be effective in shaping a future that can be better for them, as well as the people who are often invisible, left out and not really recognised in the system, such as women and community members who, although their livelihoods are involved, are not necessarily the direct workers themselves. That broader, marginalised community must be included in the conversation, because it affects them just as much as it does anyone.

The fourth principle is about having "comprehensive plans and policy frameworks" at regional, local or national level. It is also about bearing in mind the roles of training, reskilling, education, social protection, subsidies and climate finance, and having an integrated policy framework that helps all that to happen and helps communities to make the shift to a better future. If it is done well, a just transition can help communities that might otherwise block and resist change to really welcome it and be enthusiastic about it.

That is why we developed those principles. We note that the term "just transition" currently tends to focus on the livelihoods issue but, when it comes to fossil fuels, the issue is broader than that, because it is also about energy and the tax base. For some countries, such as Nigeria, fossil fuels make up 70 per cent of the tax base, and that is a real issue that needs to be resolved. I think that those numbers are correct for Nigeria, but we need to check them. Diversification is critical to a just transition.

However, like many terms, this one can be co-opted in some spaces. I am not currently too alarmed that "just transition" is being used in those superficial ways, because most people are still using the term in a way that centres justice in their thinking and forces us to think about the most marginalised instead of the most healthful.

12:00

Jess Pepper: I cannot comment on the final text that came out of COP, but I acknowledge that conversations about just transition are happening in communities and were happening in parts of Glasgow during the COP process. They were inspired and informed by wider conversations about just transition, but they are based on smaller stories about what that looks and feels like in communities.

I would just acknowledge that that system approach is very important to enabling the just transition, but the principles that Teresa Anderson has just outlined for when we talk about how Scotland can approach the work that we need to do and how Parliament can support that work are the principles that we keep coming back to, in terms of inclusion, participation and the

comprehensive framework. Having all that in place means that we will be enhancing equalities instead of exacerbating inequalities. Those are all principles of the wider conversation that we can apply when we discuss how Parliament can support the transition. That would be valued from the local level right through to those who want certainty for business and for planning in their own way.

Fiona Hyslop: I am interested in the geopolitical challenges ahead of COP27. Other colleagues will talk about domestic aspects that are reflected in Scotland.

I am interested in what Mary Church was saying about climate finance. We know that losses and damages will be huge for the next year, but you made points about climate finance in relation to the sense of realism that the China-India intervention brought. What does that mean now in relation to advancing the phasing out of coal in India? What would need to be realised in terms of the climate finance that we spoke of?

For Teresa, there are the same questions about the geopolitics of the role of China, Russia and India from COP26 and how we go forward. Also, what are your international networks—the global citizenry—telling you as a result of COP26 and the Glasgow pact?

Mary Church: Climate finance is part of our coming to the table and showing that we in the global north understand our responsibility for causing the problem and that we are prepared to take on that responsibility and to act. Doing that will bring China and India forward in their commitments, too.

It is worth saying something about fair share analysis, which is work that is being done by the same wide coalition of civil society organisations internationally. It is rooted in the Climate Equity Reference Project group, which takes from the UNFCCC its principles of equity, historical responsibility, and common but differentiated responsibility. The analysis looks at the science of remaining carbon budgets, and it considers development thresholds and the right of countries of the global south to develop cleanly, which is also enshrined in the UNFCCC. To put it crudely, that is their right to pollute what is remaining of atmospheric space. It takes all those elements and comes up with an analysis of who needs to do what in terms of emission reductions in climate finance. In 2014-15, ahead of the Paris agreement, it found that most developing countries, including China and India, were actually already committed to doing their fair share or more of climate action and that, where things were falling down, it was to do with global north countries failing to cut their emissions fast enough or to provide vital climate finance.

Of course, there are conditional and unconditional parts of the nationally determined contributions of developing countries. The conditional part is reliant on the global north's climate finance, technology transfer and other forms of action. Based on the climate equity reference group analysis, we produced some work looking at what the United Kingdom's fair share of climate finance and climate action would be. That work showed that, if the UK reduced its emissions by 200 per cent by 2030, that would be it doing its fair share. Of course, that is physically impossible. What is possible is for it to reduce its emissions to zero by 2030, which would mean that it would owe something in the region of £1 trillion of climate finance to the global south. That is a lot of money. Of course, the UK's actual climate targets will bring us to net zero by 2050, which means that what the UK owes in climate finance will rise to compensate for that.

We are talking about big figures—as I said, £1 trillion is a lot of money. However, over the past few years, and in the past decade, we have seen that Governments can and do mobilise that kind of finance when they think that they need to. In 2007-08, sums in excess of £1 trillion were mobilised to support the banks because it was considered that they were too big to fail. Our planet is too big to fail; our ecosystems are too big to fail; and this crisis is too big to ignore.

More recently, large sums of money—again, in the trillions—have been mobilised in the UK and globally to respond to the Covid crisis, which shows that that kind of finance is available. Governments can come up with it, and they really must come up with it if we are to see that kind of corresponding action from countries that are big polluters in terms of the amount that they are emitting within their borders today but are not necessarily big polluters in terms of per capita emissions and are certainly not big polluters in terms of their historical responsibility.

Teresa Anderson: With regard to international networks and attitudes to the Glasgow pact, the rhetoric in the UK is quite different from that in the rest of the world. People elsewhere see the pact as representing the global north countries continuing to block climate action and climate finance.

We came into this process with the failure to meet the £100 billion target that was set a decade ago. The target is insufficient, and the majority of it is loans. Most of what is coming through is going towards mitigation, which is in the interests of the global north. Little of the money is going towards adaptation and nothing is going towards loss and damage. There is a real scepticism around the world about what is happening. The view is that, when the rich countries talk about climate action,

they do so in an entirely self-interested way. They want others to fix the problem around mitigation without wanting to do much themselves or provide what is needed to make it happen. There is a lot of cynicism about that kind of bluffing.

China and India are often seen as speaking for themselves in isolation, but we must not forget that they often speak with their G77 hats on, as part of the wider bloc, when they express their concerns about equity.

As Mary Church outlined, there is some defensiveness on the part of global south countries and they are concerned about the fact that they simply do not have the resources to undertake mitigation without the required support. If you put yourself in the shoes of a vulnerable country that is dealing with the aftermath of a cyclone, you can see that you will spend whatever few resources that you have on rebuild and recovery, and that that will still not leave you with enough to help communities to bridge the gap and avoid falling into a poverty spiral—you will not have enough to help people to rebuild their schools and homes and avoid hunger. Any pennies that you have left over, you will want to spend on becoming resilient to future impacts. However, the point is that, when you are being pummelled by disasters, it is simply not in your interest to plough your money into windmills when you are not even one of the countries that have caused the problem in the first place. That is why the global south has a different take on the Glasgow pact—it is because those countries come at the issue from a different starting point. Finance, equity and responsibility are the key points in that regard.

Fiona Hyslop: I was interested in what you were saying about the maths of the carbon offset not necessarily matching the land that is available globally. That is quite a challenge, and it is interesting from a Scottish perspective. I am conscious of time, but, with the convener's permission, it would be helpful to get a bit more insight into that point.

Teresa Anderson: I will give you an example based on ActionAid's consideration of Shell's net zero target. Shell has set out the details of what it plans to do in the next 10 years with regard to its pathway to net zero by 2050. Just by 2030, it would require land three times the size of the Netherlands, which is ironic given that it is a Dutch company—well, it was once; it declared a few weeks ago that it is moving back to the UK.

Of course, Shell is not planning to plant trees and do offsetting in the Netherlands or the neighbouring countries; it plans to plant a large amount of trees largely in the global north. Through the biofuels experience, which escalated between 2007 and 2012, we saw how a supposed climate solution ended up putting a huge burden on land and on smallholder farmers, women and indigenous communities and replacing forests, leading to hunger, rising food prices and displacement. The biofuels approach is completely inequitable and impossible to achieve on a global scale. Of course, Shell's net zero target is just one out of all the net zero targets that are out there. Many of those net zero targets do not involve people undertaking the radical transformations that are needed in the next years and decades; instead, they rely heavily on land assumptions or future technologies that people hope will come along and save them but which will probably never be possible.

We should not be lulled into a false sense of security by these net zero targets. We must scrutinise them and ask whether they are bringing about the transformation that we need. In the vast majority of cases, they are not.

Monica Lennon: I am mindful of time, so I will try to lump a few things into one question, and witnesses can respond to the parts that are most relevant to them.

I want to return to the issue of a just transition, and, in that regard, I refer everyone to my entry in the register of members' interests, which states that I am a member of Unite the union and the GMB.

At the Glasgow conference, we saw climate strikers and environmentalists coming together publicly with workers and trade unions. That is a positive development. It appears that the public believe the science and are following it, but many workers are still quite sceptical about the ability of politicians and Governments to deliver a just transition, because they have never seen a just transition being delivered before. What needs to happen to make that just transition happen?

Mary Church talked about strengthening the climate change plan and developing a credible road map, and Jess Pepper touched on the issue of a route map, too. From the conversations that you have had with people at COP, what do you think people want to happen at national level?

We heard a lot about greenwashing ahead of COP and during it, in the blue zone. What can we do, in terms of public and political education, to enable us all to know that it is greenwashing when we see it, a bit like fake news? Often, we talk about education for children and young people in schools, but such education needs to be a lifelong thread running through all our lives. How can we make sure that the public have the right tools to be properly engaged in the conversation and to be able to call out greenwashing when they see it?

12:15

Mary Church: I agree that one of the really positive things in Glasgow was that coming together on the picket lines of the youth climate strikers and the climate justice movement with workers in really essential services.

It is worth reminding ourselves that the big, high-profile strikes that were happening ahead of and during COP were really around the delivery of essential services. Refuse workers and rail workers were striking for decent pay and conditions for essential services, which are a key part of the response to the climate crisis. Refuse workers and waste infrastructure are absolutely key to delivering on the need to shift to a circular economy. The railways and public transport generally are absolutely key to delivering on the shift away from the private car and to tackling the transport emissions issue, which has so far been very difficult to tackle.

In terms of what workers need to see to be convinced about the just transition, you touched on the answers in your question: clear plans and clear timescales are needed, not just for workers but for industry. People need to see investment and they need to see policies that show how they will be supported out of one job, in one industry, into another. They need to be shown how the skills that they already have will be transferred into the new green economy.

It is worth reflecting that previous energy transitions in this country have largely been unjust transitions. Probably nobody around the table needs reminding about the transition away from coal and the damage that that did and continues to do, which is embedded in many communities around Scotland.

More positively, the example of the oil and gas industry shows that such a shift can be done. The first year that we drilled a single drop of oil from the North Sea was 1969; only 12 years later, the UK was an exporter of gas. Another three years after that, we were one of the world's top five exporters of oil and gas. Within 15 years, we went from drilling no oil or gas to being one of the top exporters. That is the kind of timescale that we need to meet in moving away from fossil fuels in Scotland and in the UK. It can be done—it has been done—it just requires Government intervention, Government planning and public finance.

On finance, people ask where the money for the shift will come from. We again just have to look at the fossil fuel industry and all the subsidies that it receives. Those subsidies clearly need to be shifted away from fossil fuels and into the renewables industry and the wider green economy.

Teresa Anderson: I fully agree with all of that; I just highlight that inclusive processes are key to a just transition. We must involve people rather than just giving them something that they feel does not address their multitude of needs.

On the point about greenwashing, there were many announcements at COP, but a lot of them did not have clear criteria. Some of the announcements, particularly on agriculture, which I was following more closely, had no real standards or criteria. We saw an announcement that 40 countries were declaring "something" on agriculture, for example. It was a huge mishmash of God knows what, without any paperwork to enable us to properly understand what it was all about.

Looking closely, some of those announcements were really just industries trying desperately to stay relevant, because they see the writing on the wall, and they see how the IPCC, in its special report on land and climate, made it clear that we have to shift away from the current systems towards agroecology and better systems that work for the planet. That is a desperate attempt to stay relevant, without any criteria, standards or exclusions on what real action needs to look like.

I could name a number of things that we need in order to avoid greenwash. One example is having criteria before such initiatives get launched and before everybody joins the club and has a chance to weaken them; another is ensuring that announcements are clearly linked to NDCs. We had no sense of what all the announcements meant in real terms by way of national action, or of what their contributions were to 1.5°.

There is also the issue of offsets. With all the net zero announcements, given the minimal global capacity to offset and the limited amount of land that has been cleared for new tree plantations, it is safer to assume that most offsets cannot really be achieved or that, if one company manages to do it, others will not. It is easier to dismiss things or take things as assumptions than to actually require real transformation.

We need more discussion about how to scale things down—not scaling everything up or making bad things slightly better. We need to understand how to take those things that are a problem out of the equation, but to do so in a fair and just way. That is where the just transition links closely to the attempts to address greenwash.

Monica Lennon: Thanks, Teresa. Jess, in giving your answer, will you also reflect on your earlier remarks about the public being energised and about public expectations? I am thinking about the legacy of COP26 for people here in Scotland. I would be interested to hear your thoughts on that.

Jess Pepper: I will try to remember to cover all of that.

On the just transition, I agree with all the previous comments. I acknowledge the need for participation at whatever level. Whether in a whole sector or at a community level, people need to be engaged and involved in the process. There is sometimes a worry that that will slow down the pace when we urgently need to make progress. However, our experience is that, once people feel confident and engaged in a process that they trust, that can accelerate the process and bring momentum and energy. Importantly, that can deliver an outcome that is workable for people, rather than something being signed centrally and then put to people. It is about engagement.

The important word is "shift". Such things have to be financed, but whether they involve a shift to clean energy or a shift in transport, that shift has to happen. I constantly hear that people want to be doing their bit but they need a system change. They are frustrated because they see that the system is still favouring the old story rather than the new story. I say again that the shift needs to happen, and in order for it to happen, we need to open things up and to constantly scrutinise whether things are happening or not. Are ambitions being translated into the national planning framework or strategic planning on transport, for instance? If not, and if people lose hope, they will lose their engagement in being part of the transition.

On greenwashing, we have seen through COP26 the start of an unpacking of previous solutions such as CCS and hydrogen. We talk a lot about hydrogen without necessarily distinguishing between the different types. Before COP26, we heard a lot of questions about hydrogen in community conversations. What does it mean? I do not feel knowledgeable about the differences and the choices. Where can it be used? Where can it not be used? Once that is unpacked, people feel a lot more confident in their knowledge, and that informs them about what they hear and about green hydrogen, blue hydrogen and the different implications.

I do not wish to give the impression that communities are not informed, but it happens on a scale. People always want more information to inform their contributions, actions and lives. People are anxious because they see impacts, but they also care about the impacts that are coming quickly to others. Information and access to understanding of what is going on are important.

Part of the contribution to the climate conversations in communities has been through the climate reality project, in which we get a summary of what the climate science impacts and solutions are. There are global snapshots of some of the solutions. Once people hear that stuff and join the dots between their knowledge of what is going on in the science and the impacts and what the solutions might be, they take things on themselves. There is something that we need to harness as a nation. Everybody should have access to the information and the resources that they need in order to inform their own conversations, rather than having to pick and choose and work out what to believe or trust. Once folk have their own conversations going on, they bring energy and momentum into their lives and experiences, whether they are in health, education or whatever.

A dialogue with local government, for example, can be really valuable. People can say that they want to switch from their cars to public transport and active travel, but they may feel that they cannot do that because they do not have a safe route to cycle between communities. They can start to have a really meaningful conversation with local government and public bodies. We hear from local government that it really values that approach because it does not involve a finger-waving exercise; there is dialogue, which produces a route map for how it can deliver change.

There is real potential to bring people what they need, harness energy, take the momentum that we have accelerated through hosting COP26, and apply it in that way. Communities need to be brought into the conversation in the same participative way that I talked about in relation to a just transition. We are not hearing many first-hand experiences from people in communities, and that applies not just to those whom we would expect to hear from, but to all communities. We should go to them, hear their experiences, needs and challenges and bring them to the heart of the conversation. The Parliament could help to ensure that that happens.

Jackie Dunbar: I will be brief as I am conscious of the time. What is the one thing that the Scottish Parliament should be doing? What expert advice should we be tapping into? I ask Jess Pepper to answer those questions first, please, because she has touched on those issues.

Jess Pepper: I refer to previous comments about keeping the conversation going. I also want to pick up on Dave Reay's comments about the fact that it is all landing on one committee. Parliament as a whole needs to keep the conversation going and to scrutinise budgets and public spend. It needs to ensure that everything that is discussed across all the committees—in relation to health, education and so on—is in line with tackling the climate and nature emergencies.

I could reel off a list of things that people have been talking about over, probably, 20 years.

However, mainstreaming the conversation really brings it to the heart of everything that we do, and it means that people can look to and trust the process and the structure. Bringing the conversation back to the people could be really valuable. It would bring openness, transparency, accountability and participation, which will be key to making progress. That has been referred to elsewhere.

Mary Church: One thing that the committee could do is the job that your predecessor committee set out back in the spring. It could really hold the Government to account on the climate change plan update and the missed targets. Your predecessor committee flagged up 166 points to be addressed in respect of the climate change plan update. It asked for a credible plan B that would move away from the overreliance on negative emissions technologies that we saw in the updates—in other words, something that did not just rely on CCS capturing residual emissions. The aim of reducing emissions by a quarter through such technology by 2032 does not align with industry projections of when it will come on stream. We have serious reservations about whether it will ever do so, but even the industry is not claiming that it will be able to mop up that amount within that timescale. The committee needs to hold the Government to account on the points that were flagged up back in the spring.

We have also seen the recent section 36 update report, which was a response to a missed target and which has, I think, been laid before Parliament as per the regulations. I do not think that this or any other committee is required to scrutinise it, but I would strongly advise the committee to do so. It is not very long—it is only 15 pages—and it contains some positive things, most of which have been taken from the election manifesto, the co-operation agreement and the programme for government. There are a couple of new things in it, too. However, it contains no numbers, which makes it very hard to tell whether it is credible. It would be great if you could look at the report, get the minister in and ask some difficult questions about it.

As for who else or what other expert advice you should be listening to, there are many experts out there. It would be useful for the committee to listen to what civil society is saying, for example. I have mentioned once or twice the work of the Civil Society Review, and we can forward those reports to the committee.

There is also the work that the COP26 Coalition did during the Glasgow summit. Over two years, we ran several online people's summits, and ahead of and during COP26 we ran a hybrid in-person and online people's summit. In those sessions, many of which were captured and recorded, people discussed not only the impacts of the climate crisis, but the solutions. By tuning into and listening to what was said in those sessions, you could learn a lot about what needs to be done and, indeed, see the real public appetite for change and the real anger that is out there.

We in Friends of the Earth have not come across as being very hopeful about the outcome of COP26, but we draw hope from the really powerful movement or movements that we might have helped to instigate, but which have since grown beyond our hopes. People will continue to act together and hold decision makers to account until we get the change that we need.

Jackie Dunbar: Do we have time to hear from Teresa Anderson, convener?

The Convener: Very briefly.

Teresa Anderson: I am quite heartened by the committee's real willingness to be a world leader and to push itself and the world in taking forward the movement that Scotland has already made on loss and damage, finance and a just transition. Those issues are key, and you must continue to push the boat out on them as they have proved to be very helpful in the global conversation.

We also need to have the right conversations about the things that are not being asked. Perhaps you need to initiate conversations and put in place a task force—[*Inaudible.*]—more real transformation. It could ask the question: what is a fair share of 1.5°C, and what is really required in order to get there? Such a move might be able to spark and inspire the world and perhaps make a real difference to getting the planet back on track. You could even have a task force to look at how money is being spent and where it could be better spent. Those are real issues that have not been raised anywhere in the conversation, yet they are essential to it.

The Convener: That brings us to the end of our allotted time. I thank our guests for what was a very interesting panel discussion and for their insights into the outcomes of COP26 and the wide range of issues that have been brought to our attention. Please enjoy the rest of your day.

That brings us to the end of the public part of the meeting.

12:34

Meeting continued in private until 12:52.

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